

DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

JR WEEKLY JR

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 289.

Price, Five Cents.

DIAMOND DICK AND THE BLACK DWARF

OR
HOT WORK FOR UNCLE SAM



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
DIAMOND DICK

"I'LL KILL THE FIRST MAN THAT PULLS A TRIGGER!" SHOUTED OLD DIAMOND DICK.

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Diamond Dick and the Black Dwarf;

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By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

A DARE-DEVIL DEED.

"The Dwarf!"

"The Black Dwarf!"

"What the thunderin' blazes is he up to?"

"Stop him!"

"Kill him!"

"Let him alone and he'll kill himself!"

"But he'll kill the girl, too! Oh, can't something be done?"

A scene of indescribable confusion and uproar was immediately turned on, full tilt, at one of the strangest places in the Southwest, and during one of the strangest spectacles ever witnessed.

As to the place, it was the pueblo of Wolpi, "the place of the gap," Moke Indian Reservation, Northern Arizona.

And the spectacle was a pagan rite, handed down among the Mokis for ages and known as the "Snake Dance."

The village of Wolpi is built upon the crest of a mesa, or elevated plateau; and all day long people had been gathering there, for the festivities to take place at sunset are noted the country over.

There were prospectors and photographers, Mormons and scientists, cowboys and army officers, teachers and tourists—men, women and children, taking advantage of every inch of standing room to be had about the open space where the dance was to occur.

Toward the upper end of the open space there is a mushroom-shaped rock some twenty feet in height. It is called the "Dance Rock" and has ever been a favorite place of observation for those who would view the heathen ceremony.

On its left, the rock is flanked with the terraced sides of the pueblo, or community house, the terraces swarming with spectators, white and red.

The chasm between the top of the Dance Rock and the second story of the pueblo on this occasion had

been bridged with a cottonwood log, and the make-shift bridge, as well as the top of the huge boulder, was crowded with sightseers.

On the right of the Dance Rock were ten or fifteen feet of plateau and then the steep descent of the mesa's side—at that point made fairly easy by a foot trail of rude stone steps, gashed through solid rock in places and sometimes ten feet wide and sometimes not more than three.

Richard Wade, otherwise known as Diamond Dick, and Captain Fitzsimmons, of Uncle Sam's cavalry service, were well posted on the Dance Rock.

The captain and the veteran were old friends, and had met each other just prior to the grand entry of the "Antelope priests," bringing the sacred bowl containing the "medicine" to be used in the celebration.

"What brings you here, Diamond Dick?" the captain asked, after shaking hands with the old fighter. "Curiosity?"

"Not altogether," laughed Diamond Dick. "Bertie, Handsome Harry and I are about to start on a trail for Uncle Sam."

"Some outlaw?"

"A fellow who calls himself the Black Dwarf has stolen some annuity money, and I have been asked by the Government to get the money back, if possible, but, at any rate, to capture the Dwarf, alive or dead."

The captain pulled a long face at mention of the Black Dwarf.

"I don't envy you your task, Dick," said he.

One of the veteran's quiet smiles passed over his face as he inquired nonchalantly.

"Why not?"

"The Dwarf is a fiend, a bloodthirsty wretch who has nothing human in his make-up."

"He must be an extremely interesting person."

Diamond Dick brought out his cigar-case and offered it to the captain.

"He's an extremely dangerous person, I assure you of that," declared the officer.

"In what way is he more dangerous than the average run of outlaws who infest the hills?"

"He is part Apache and part Mexican, and has taken the worst traits of both races."

"And why is he called the Dwarf?"

"He's a hunchback. You know how that annuity money was captured?"

"I have heard that it was intercepted while being convoyed to the trading post where it was to be disbursed."

"That was the way of it. The Dwarf, with a band of six, attacked the convoy of twelve. Single-handed, he fought four frontiersmen, killed two and wounded two, and turned the scale in favor of his gang. They got the money—\$30,000 in an iron chest. Diamond Dick, Jr., and the old Serpent are with you, you say?"

"They are with me in this deal, yes."

"Are they here in Wolpi?"

"I am expecting them every moment. I came by La Reaux Wash and Kearn's Canyon; Bertie will come by Rocky Ford Crossing and Touchez-de-nez and Harry by Turkey Tanks and Little Burro."

"You come to Wolpi by detachments," commented the captain.

"We tried to cover as much ground as possible. The chances for gathering information are better."

"I see. Pardon my curiosity, but why have you come to Wolpi?"

"Those are our directions from headquarters. The daughter of the Indian agent who was to have received the annuity money is to meet us here and give information of value."

"Tonita Kissane!"

"Is she the girl?"

"Yes."

"Her first name comes from below the Rio Grande."

"She's anything but Greaser, however. I know Kissane well, and his daughter, also. Tony, as everybody calls the girl, ought to have been a boy, for she delights in all the masculine feats of the frontier."

"I admire that sort of a girl."

"So do I, although such a girl is apt to run into some exciting experiences. But to come back to the Dwarf. Let me tell you that he's a dare-devil. In spite of his short stature, he's a veritable Samson, and the way he can use his hardware is a caution. Five men, that I can name, have gone out after the Dwarf."

"How close did they come to getting him?"

"Not one of the five ever came back to report."

A steely look came into the old veteran's eyes.

"Then it's high time some one went out and came back with him."

"I agree with you, and the Government was wise in enlisting your services. As I said before, however, I don't envy you your job, Wade."

The Antelope priests, led by the Antelope Chief, were going through their maneuvers, and the two friends gave over their conversation to watch proceedings.

These Indians had bare feet, and their semi-nude bodies were streaked with white paint.

As they circled four times around the plaza to the left, each one would stamp with his heel on the middle of a plank, supposed to be the entrance to the under world and to notify the ghosts of their fathers that a ceremony was going forward.

When the Antelope priests were done, the Snake priests strode into the plaza.

Their bodies were painted red, and they wore dark kilts and moccasins and barbaric ornaments.

They also circled four times around the opened space and kicked on the plank a message to the shades of their ancestors.

After that they lined up in front of the Antelopes.

Then followed a short stage wait and then came a general dance, the priests swaying, singing and laying about them with their eaglefeather snake whips.

While this was going on, the man with the medicine bowl walked back and forth spilling the magic liquid in every direction.

A few moments and one of the snake priests rushed to a bower of cottonwood boughs and dropped on his knees before it.

When he arose he had in his hands a squirming rattlesnake.

The serpent he took in his mouth, midway of its length; then other priests took serpents from the kisi, as the bower is called, and all danced in a circle.

At this interesting point in the ceremony there was confusion among the spectators on the side of the mesa overlooking the steep descent to the plain below.

Cries followed, as at the opening of this chapter, all voiced by men except the last, which was uttered frantically by a lady tourist:

"But he'll kill the girl, too. Oh, can't something be done?"

Old Diamond Dick was on his feet in a flash, looking off down the foot trail with its rude stone steps.

High over the noise he heard the ring of a horse's

shoes on the rocks, and the "thumpety-thump, thumpety-thump" of a galloping steed.

A queer-looking figure on horseback was riding down the treacherous foot trail at breakneck speed.

This, in itself, was a dare-devil deed for any horseman to attempt.

Where had the man come from, to be riding away in such a manner?

This was a question that flashed through Diamond Dick's mind, but it was one he made no attempt to answer.

The man in the saddle had a short, misshapen body, wore a coonskin cap and buckskin shirt, leggings and moccasins.

Across his horse, in front of the saddle, he was holding a girl, one bony hand clutching her throat and choking her into submission.

Diamond Dick jerked a revolver from under his coat, and twice did he raise it, his glittering eye flashing along the barrel.

"Shoot!" cried the captain, knowing well that the old veteran had not his equal as a marksman anywhere on the frontier.

"The distance is too great," answered Diamond Dick, as he lowered his revolver for the second time. "Besides, it isn't necessary."

"Not necessary?" echoed the captain.

"Why, that girl the Dwarf is carrying off is Tony Kissane!"

"He'll never carry her off. Look! Diamond Dick, Jr., is directly in his path!"

CHAPTER II.

TONY.

Young Diamond Dick was really in front of the Black Dwarf, mounting the stone steps on foot toward the mesa.

He saw the horrified faces looking down at him from every ledge and cranny; and he saw the fierce clasp with which the demoniacal hunchback held the girl.

By a quick process of reasoning, he arrived at the status of the case and a couple of leaps forward and upward placed him in the narrowest part of the foot trail with stout stone walls on either hand.

The pagan dance above lost the attention of at least half its spectators, for all could tell that it was the young sport's intention, on foot though he was, to attempt to stop the rushing horse.

In a twinkling, Bertie had posted himself firmly and had snatched off his coat.

"Git out o' my way or I'll kill ye!" cried the Dwarf, shrilly.

No answer was returned to the command, but Diamond Dick, Jr., never swerved by a hair's breadth.

Instead, he began waving his coat up and down to frighten the horse and turn it from its course.

The Dwarf had a Winchester swinging from his saddle bow, but it was impossible for him to release both his hands and use it.

He may have had a revolver upon his person, although he did not resort to such a weapon.

The reins were lying across his horse's neck and when the animal showed symptoms of shying at the coat, he dug in with his spurs.

Precisely at the same moment he released his right hand and thrust it into a pocket in his buckskin shirt.

When the hand was withdrawn it held a writhing rattlesnake.

"Git out o' the way, I tell ye!" shrieked the Dwarf.

Still the young sport held his ground.

The horse was now not more than six yards away and the hunchback hurled the snake.

Those above saw the girl attempt to stay her captor's hand, but without success, and the twisting serpent shot through the air.

The young sport could have sprung aside and thus avoided the reptile, but such a move would have allowed the hunchback to ride past with the girl.

This Diamond Dick, Jr., would not do.

The rattler slapped against his neck and coiled itself over his shoulders.

At that critical juncture the horse dashed upon him and the young sport threw himself upon the bit, caught a good hold and intended to cling there until the animal was brought to a stop.

The bit broke, however, and Bertie fell, narrowly escaping the horse's heels.

Yet he was successful, in so far as saving the girl was concerned, for she had wrenched herself free of her captor during the excitement, and had leaped to the stone steps.

By then the foot trail was thronged with people hurrying downward and the Dwarf, with a terrible curse, continued to spur his horse onward, discarding

the reins of the broken bridle and guiding the animal by tugging at its mane.

Shot after shot rang out.

There was now no danger of striking the girl, and a leaden hail was rained all about the outlaw.

But he appeared to bear a charmed life.

Not a bullet struck him, and when he was well out of range he turned in his saddle, shook his clenched fist defiantly, and vanished.

Bertie, although far from being seriously injured, had been stunned and bruised by his fall.

Tony, alighting on her feet like a cat, rushed to him, plucked the rattler away, cast it on the ground and set her heel on its head.

"You're bitten in three places!" she cried, looking at Bertie's neck. "And this—this is all on my account."

"That's all right, little girl," said Bertie, struggling to his feet and slipping into his coat. "Where can I get some good whisky? I must have it quick."

"I know something better than whisky," she answered, catching his hand. "Come with me."

Instantly she began pulling him up the flight of steps.

"Where are you going?" asked Bertie.

"To the pueblo."

"What for?"

"I'll show you. Don't you worry. Trust Tony Kissane."

"You are sure——"

"Sure?" she cried. "You got yourself into this scrape by rescuing me from the Black Dwarf, and do you think for a minute that I'd take any chances with your life? I'll save you, I say. But hurry, hurry."

Then Bertie gave himself into the girl's hands and sprang up the steep trail at her side.

Presently they met those who were coming down, foremost among them being old Diamond Dick and Captain Fitzsimmons.

"Were you bitten, Bertie?" asked Diamond Dick.

"Yes."

"Then we must have whisky—one poison will have to counteract the other."

"Hyer!" put in a cowboy, close behind Diamond Dick. "Let him take down what's in this bottle."

The puncher stretched forth a pint flask, half full. Diamond Dick reached out to get the bottle, but

the girl struck it from his hand, crashing it in pieces on the rocks.

"I'm takin' care of him!" she cried. "The other cure won't work if he tries whisky. Break away, above there, and let us through!"

The girl's fiercely-determined manner carried the day.

"She knows, Dick," Diamond Dick, Jr., called to the old veteran. "Let her have her way."

Diamond Dick was loath to resign the young sport into a stranger's hands at such a time, but the captain said:

"He's right, Wade—Tony Kissane knows. Whenever she says she'll do a thing she does it."

Up the foot trail through the throng of excited people ran Tony and Bertie.

They reached the mesa and the girl began crying, in a loud voice:

"Sepulpa! Sepulpa!"

Sepulpa was the head snake-woman.

She knew more about snakes than any one in her tribe, and the cries of Tony were not long in bringing Sepulpa to the scene.

The priestess was not fair to look upon.

She was aged and stooped, wore a greasy old blanket over her shoulders, had her well-oiled, grayish hair done up at the sides of her head in bunches that looked like horns, and was chewing tobacco.

Some quick words in the Indian tongue passed between Tony and Sepulpa.

As soon as the snake-woman learned what was wanted of her, her old body straightened and became endued with an almost supernatural strength.

Fire flashed in her eyes, and every movement was as swift as the dart of a hawk.

Her first act was to drop the bit of tobacco which she was chewing into her hand, clap it to the three small scars at the back of the young sport's neck, and bind it there with a piece of cloth taken from somewhere about her person.

It was not a pleasant beginning, but the end probably justified the means.

This done, Sepulpa started for the side of the pueblo, waving her hand to signify that Tony and Bertie were to follow.

Up a ladder went the priestess, the girl and the young sport close after her and the captain and the veteran bringing up the rear.

Into a doorway on the third or topmost tier of

dwellings they passed, and found themselves in Sepulpa's own hangout.

A bed of rushes was at one side of the room, and Sepulpa pointed to it as she said:

"Little Thunderbolt lay down."

There was a time when the sobriquet, "Little Thunderbolt," had been fastened upon the young sport, but it was long now since he had heard it.

Already he felt the poison in his system.

His neck and throat had begun to swell and the blood seemed to run red-hot in his veins.

Without waiting for a second bidding, he flung himself down on the heap of rushes.

Diamond Dick, Fitzsimmons and Tony stood around anxiously.

"You have heard me speak of Captain Fitzsimmons, Bertie," said old Diamond Dick. "Here he is. He says that Miss Kissane knows what she is doing."

"And I know that Sepulpa knows what she is doing," spoke up Tony. "She saved me once from a rattler's bite. Dad brought me clear from the agency, and I was nearly tuckered when I got to Wolpi, I can tell you. But Sepulpa brought me through."

Bertie shook hands with the captain.

"These Indians are well up in this kind of work," smiled the young sport. "We'll give Sepulpa all the rope she wants, and I don't think we'll have any kick coming."

Sepulpa, with a bowl in her hand, was just starting toward young Diamond Dick, when the doorway was darkened by a huge form.

"Gle-ory to snakes an' pizen varmints!" exclaimed an angry voice. "What's this I hear? The son of his dad gittin' mixed up with a side-winder an' bein' brought hyer fer treatment? Durn me fer a short yearlin', Dick, whar's the hombre thet tossed the reptile at him? Whar is he? Tell me, an' by the jumpin' sandhills! I'll string him all over the mesa!"

The newcomer was Handsome Harry, just in from Turkey Tanks and Little Burro.

CHAPTER III.

THE START FOR THE TRADING POST.

"Don't fret about the fellow that threw the rattler at me, old pard," said Bertie. "It was the Black Dwarf, and he's already on our blacklist."

"What I've heerd has put me in a killin' mood, son," growled the old Serpent of Siskiyou, pushing

into the room. "Did ye git much o' the pizen inter yer system?"

"Enough to lay me on the shelf if this Indian woman can't help me out."

Handsome Harry stood to one side while Sepulpa stooped and placed the bowl to Bertie's lips.

"Drink," she said, laconically.

It was a nauseous dose, but the young sport swallowed it to the last drop.

"D'ye mean ter say, Dick," said Harry, turning to the old veteran, "thet this hyer maverick of a Black Dwarf pushed right inter Wolpi, with punchers, an' tourists, an' everybody else, ter lay fer him?"

"That was the play he made, Harry."

"He's a dare-devil," interjected the captain. "I told you that, Wade."

"He's fixin' ter git a hectic flush put all over him," grunted the old Serpent. "Did any of the gang hyerabouts foller the varmint?"

"Four cowboys started off on his trail. But their horses were hitched at the foot of the mesa, and the Dwarf had a good long start before they could get into their saddles, so I don't imagine the pursuit will amount to much."

Diamond Dick presented the Californian to the captain, and after a brief exchange of words, Harry turned to Bertie.

"How ye feelin', son?" he asked.

"Better already," responded the young sport.

"These Injuns aire top-liners at curin' snake bites. Did ye git a grip on any information concernin' the Black Dwarf on yer way hyer, Bertie?"

"I had the quietest kind of a trip."

"Which is the way I stack up, an' I'm hungrier'n two bears, right this present speakin'. I had beans fer breakfast, water fer dinner, an' now I'm swellin' up fer supper."

Harry hitched up his belt a notch.

"Did you copper anythin', Dick?"

Diamond Dick shook his head.

"Well, look, pards," said Harry; "s'posin' we round up our bunch an' purceed ter decide on what's ter be done?"

"The thing to be done," returned old Diamond Dick, "is to get the report of the agent's daughter."

"An' whar may she be?"

"Right here," put in Tony, promptly.

"Aire you the gal thet humpbacked varmint was tryin' ter make off with?"

Harry whirled on the girl as he put the question.

"I am," answered Tony.

There was now time to give the girl more than passing notice and Dick and his friends saw that she was dark, neatly clad, after the Eastern fashion, and without any frontier trumpery, and apparently eighteen or nineteen years of age.

She was not exactly handsome, but she carried herself in a dashing way that lent a charm of its own.

"You have not told us of your share in this exciting little episode, Tony," remarked Dick.

"There isn't much to tell. I was climbing up the foot trail when some one leaped out from behind a rock, caught me by the throat and choked me until, for the moment, I lost my senses.

"I came to myself in a few moments, and found that I was on horseback, a prisoner of the Dwarf's.

"Then, like a dream, I saw Diamond Dick, Jr., appear in the pathway, and you all know what followed."

"Why should the Dwarf try to make off with you?"

A rich red spread itself under Tony's sunburned cheeks.

"He had the impudence to wait upon my father, a month ago, and ask for my hand," said she, in an embarrassed manner, her bright eyes shifting covertly to young Diamond Dick.

"What happened?" asked Bertie, sitting up.

"Dad kicked him out of the store."

"Bully fer dad!" exclaimed the old Serpent.

"The Dwarf swore then that he'd have me, by hook or crook, and that he'd also have revenge on my father."

"And you think," put in old Diamond Dick, his sympathy aroused for the girl, "that the hunchback was seeking to abduct you and thus carry out one part of his plan?"

Tony nodded.

"Don't lose your courage, Tony," said Bertie.

"Before we leave the country we'll see to it that the Dwarf loses his power to molest you."

"Now ye're torkin', son," concurred Harry.

"You know why my pards and I have come here, don't you, Tony?" the old veteran went on.

"Yes. Dad received word from headquarters."

"Why couldn't your father come here in place of you?"

"Owing to the threats made by the Dwarf and his

gang, dad has had to barricade himself in the store with his guns handy."

"What have you to tell us?"

"Well, in the first place, Diamond Dick, the annuity money was in a small iron safe. The combination of the safe was known to only two men. Dad is one of these, and the other was with the convoy, and was killed. The Black Dwarf got the safe, but he can't open it."

"Can't the Dwarf get into the safe?"

"He has no dynamite to use in blowing it open, and had not found it convenient to get some in the settlements. It's hard to carry the safe around, and —"

"An' the blame coyote has got the money an' ag'in he ain't got it," chuckled Harry.

"And he sent a notice to dad by an Indian three days ago, that he would come for the combination on Thursday morning, bright and early, and that he'd either get it or give dad a dance in the air."

"Thursday; that's to-morrow."

"Yes," answered the girl. "I'm here with a buckboard and a pair of lively bronks, and I can wheel you to the store inside of four hours."

The young sport got up from the floor.

"That means that if we don't get to the post ahead of the Dwarf, your father will probably be killed."

"He'll die before he gives up the combination of the safe."

"Wall, say," remarked Harry, "he might quiet the varmints by givin' a fake combination, hey?"

"Dad wouldn't do that," answered the girl, quietly. "It wouldn't help him much, anyhow, for he'd be killed as soon as the Dwarf found out a trick had been played."

"He won't be killed, Tony," said Diamond Dick, "for we'll be there to help him. This is our opportunity to capture the Dwarf and we must improve it."

"I'd like to go along, gentlemen," said the captain. "Your numbers will be slim enough, at best, and another man in your party would be an advantage, it seems to me. It's Uncle Sam's work, and I'm in Uncle Sam's employ, you know."

"Very well, Fitz," answered Diamond Dick. "Is there room in the buckboard, Tony?"

"Plenty of room. If you want horses, after we reach the trading post, dad has a number of good ones."

"With saddles?"

"With everything."

"It would be well for us to leave our horses below the mesa," said Diamond Dick. "They are all knocked out with the long journey we have made in getting here, and have not had a chance to rest. We can hire a rig to go in."

This plan was adopted, and the Dicks left after Sepulpa had pronounced the young sport out of danger.

The fever had left Bertie's veins and the swelling at his throat had subsided.

He gave the snake-woman five silver dollars, which he had in his pocket, and she considered herself amply repaid.

It was long after sundown when the party climbed down from the pueblo and started off along the foot trail leading to the small settlement on the plain under the mesa.

The ceremonies connected with the snake dance were over, and the spectators were thronging back.

A singular feature of the Arizona latitude is this: Darkness does not usually come with sunset, and often, at nine o'clock in the evening, it is possible to read a newspaper out of doors without the aid of a light.

For this reason, the exodus of the sightseers was almost as clear to the eye as though made at noon-day.

The attempted abduction of Tony Kissane and the gallant stand made by the young sport were talked about quite as much as was the noted snake dance, and many were the questions Diamond Dick, Jr., had to answer concerning the state of his health as resulting from the effects of the snake venom.

A hearty meal all around was secured at a make-shift hotel, and in an hour after leaving the pueblo Diamond Dick and his party were *en route* for the agency, Tony handling the lines over the backs of a pair of half-tamed bronchos.

Revolvers had been looked to, before leaving the settlement, cartridge belts had been filled, and the captain's nerves were thrilling with the excitement of the man-hunt on which the party had started.

From one or two persons whom they passed, old Diamond Dick learned that the cowboys, who had gone out after the Dwarf, had not yet returned.

"They may not return at all," said the captain, significantly; "or, if they do, they'll have scars to show, and no Dwarf will come with them. There's

nothing human about Malo Muchacho, as the hunchback is sometimes called. The way he evens up with enemies, or punishes traitors, is enough to make one's blood run cold."

The old veteran thought that Fitzsimmons was under the sort of spell which a notorious outlaw usually inspires; not so much because of what the renegade has done, as because of what people say he has done.

In a certain section of the country, whenever a peculiarly atrocious crime is committed it is charged up against the worst man known, and that without any ocular proof that the man in question committed it.

But the travelers in the buckboard were shortly to be brought face to face with a sample of the Dwarf's diabolical genius.

The course followed by Tony led directly across a desert as flat as a house floor.

For two hours the girl pushed on at a tearing pace, the Dicks riding on the front seat with her and the old Serpent and Fitzsimmons occupying the rear seat.

Suddenly the young sport glimpsed a glow of light far ahead.

At first it seemed only a mere dot, but swiftly it grew larger and larger.

"What is it?" asked Tony.

No one in the buckboard could answer the girl's question.

"Looks like a comic with a powerful long tail," observed Handsome Harry.

The "comic," however, finally resolved itself into something else.

As the light broadened and enlarged, a thump of hoofs could be heard; and then, over the rolling beat of hoofs came the hoarse cry of a man imploring help.

Instinctively Tony had drawn her bronchos to a halt, and the animals, frightened at the swiftly-advancing fireball, grew so restive that Diamond Dick, Jr., was obliged to take the reins and hang to them with all his muscle in order to prevent a runaway.

"Catamounts an' hyeners!" exclaimed the old Serpent, who was standing up in the buckboard in order to get an unobstructed look ahead. "It's a hoss!"

"And there's a man tied to the horse's back!" added Diamond Dick.

"And the man's afire!" cried the startled Tony.

"I'll take keer o' him," said Harry, and sprang from the buckboard.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRAITOR.

The streaming fire lighted up the scene so that it was impossible for Dick and his friends to be mistaken.

A man was roped to the back of a horse, the animal without a saddle or bridle and dashing across the desert in a wild frenzy.

It was a horrifying spectacle, to say the least.

Leaving the trail slightly in order to pass the team and the buckboard, the horse would have passed had not Handsome Harry brought it to earth with his revolver.

Diamond Dick and Fitzsimmons were quickly out of the wagon and their help, united with the old Serpent's, made possible a quick release for the unfortunate man.

The fire was quenched, and the man, rolling out of a charred blanket, lay for some time groaning on the ground, unable to speak.

The blanket, it seemed, had been soaked in kerosene, for the smell of oil was still about it; and the fact that the luckless individual had not been consumed was owing entirely to the swiftness of the horses's speed. The fire, in order to spread, had to struggle against the wind raised by the animal's flight.

Handsome Harry had a flask in his pocket, and he gave the man a drink of liquor.

"Curse the Muchacho!" gritted the man, as soon as he was able to speak. "Curse him, I say. I'll have his life for this!" and a terrible and blood-curdling oath followed the words.

"Are you badly burned?" asked Diamond Dick.

"Burned? No. Thet fire was nothin', although it might hev been but fer your stoppin' the hoss. Who are ye?"

The man was sitting up on the ground.

He had every appearance of being a desperado, and stared at Diamond Dick as he put his question.

"Tell us who you are," Diamond Dick answered.

"I'm Bill Sperry an' useter belong ter the Black Dwarf's gang, an' I don't keer who knows it. Muchacho got an idee thet I was a traitor, although I was as true ter him as ary other man in the gang!"

More profanity followed, Sperry finally winding up with the question:

"How many aire thar of ye?"

"Can't you see?" returned Diamond Dick.

"See? Why, I'm blinder'n a bat."

"What blinded you? The fire?"

"Fire be durned! It was El Muchacho. He heated a knifeblade red hot an' held it in front o' my eyes while I lay tied to four stakes planted in the ground. Revenge! I'll hev it ef I die fer it!"

The man went off into a paroxysm of rage and fury that knew no bounds.

"Arter blindin' me," Sperry at last continued, "the Dwarf wrapped me in a blanket soaked with coal ile, tied me to a wild hoss, teched a match ter the blanket an' so, I reckon, thort he'd done with me." A terrible laugh fluttered through Sperry's lips. "But I was saved! Ye saved me ter be the death of him! How many aire thar of ye, I say?"

"Five."

"Who be ye?"

"The Diamond Dicks——"

An exclamation of surprise and satisfaction interrupted the veteran.

"Hyer! Come clost an' let me feel!"

Sperry got up limpingly and stretched out his hands.

Diamond Dick drew close and Sperry felt of his head, shoulders and arms.

"Shore enuff!" he muttered, and once more his mirthless laugh echoed out on the night. "It's Dimun Dick, shore enuff! By savin' me, Dimun Dick, I opine ye've saved yerself, together with the four thet's with ye."

"What do you mean, Sperry?"

"I mean that El Muchacho knows the Gov'ment has got you arter him; he knows Tony Kissane went ter meet ye at Wolpi; an', knowin' all this, he's swore ye'll never git ter the agency alive! He tried ter stop Tony on the road ter Wolpi, but missed her somehow. Then he tried ter run away with the gal afore she could talk with ye—aye, he tried ter carry her off from right under the eyes of all the people, an' ef he had succeeded he'd hev made the gal his slave an' given her a fate that would hev been ten times wuss than death. The Dwarf thort I told old Kissane an' so kept his gal from bein' ketched on the road ter the pueblo. I useter be a friend o' Kissane's afore I went plum ter the bad, an' thet's what made

him think I was a traitor. Then he put out my eyes, curse him, an' made himself an enemy thet he won't git rid of as long as he draws breath. He'd hev burned me up, ef he could, but he failed, he failed, an' I'll settle with him yet."

Sperry's brain seemed to be more than half turned by the awful sufferings which he had gone through.

Whirling around, he endeavored to run away, but stumbled over the body of the dead horse.

Handsome Harry helped to pick him up.

"Don't be in a hurry to leave us, Sperry," said Diamond Dick. "You say that the Black Dwarf is waiting for us somewhere along this trail?"

"Thet's what I say."

"How many men has he?"

"Nine, an' they're in ambush. Ef ye want ter save yerself an' yer friends, Dimun Dick, put back ter Wolpi an' go a pikin'. Leave Muchacho to me!"

"Not on yer life, Sperry," struck in Handsome Harry. "When we go back ter Wolpi we take this hyer demon of a Dwarf with us."

"Thar's only five o' ye!"

"El Muchacho 'll think thar's fifty when we git arter him."

"Well, take my advice an' go another trail."

"Will the Dwarf call at the agency in the morning, Sperry?" asked Diamond Dick.

"Thet's accordin' ter programme."

"Have you seen anything of four or five cowboys who chased the Dwarf out of Wolpi?"

"Not up ter the time I lost my eyes."

"We've got a buckboard here, Sperry. Suppose you get into it and ride to the agency with us?"

"Never! I'm on a lone trail, an' I'll foller it single-handed until I square accounts with Muchacho."

"Be reasonable, man! Here you are, blind, and you must be burned not a little, as well. How can you hope to follow anybody's trail, let alone accomplish anything?"

"You wait an' you'll see."

Nor could they persuade the half-crazy renegade to go on to the agency with them.

"Tell me this," said Dick, as they were about to leave him, "has the Dwarf been able to open the safe containing the annuity money?"

"Not yet. He's sent a man over ter the minin' deestrick arter some dynamite, but he don't want ter blow up the safe, fearin' he'll sp'ile some o' the money in case it happens ter be in greenbacks. He's

goin' ter try ter git the combination from Kissane, an' ef Kissane don't give it up he'll git killed, an' he'll git killed ef he does."

Handsome Harry was of the opinion that they should have taken Bill Sperry with them, resorting to force, if necessary, and so expressed himself when they once more climbed into the buckboard and started on.

"He's gone bug-house," averred Handsome Harry; "an', besides, he's one o' the gang, accordin' ter his own confession."

"Under any other circumstances than the present," said Diamond Dick, "I should have insisted upon Sperry's going with us; but at this stage of the game it is not best for us to handicap ourselves with a prisoner."

Diamond Dick, Jr., and the captain were likewise of this opinion.

"How about the other trail, Tony?" said the old veteran.

"It will take us four or five hours to reach the agency if we leave this trail," said Tony.

"We have got to leave it, though, if we don't want to push right into an ambush," said the captain. "Sperry illustrates something I told you a short time ago, Diamond Dick. The Dwarf is a fiend when it comes to inflicting punishment upon his enemies."

"El Muchacho deserves the severest penalty the law can deal out to him," returned the veteran.

"An' we're the hombres ter ketch him an' turn him over ter Uncle Sam ter be dealt with," added Harry.

It was not long until Tony had turned from the trail and proceeded sharply toward the north on a detour which was to carry them to the agency by another and a safer route.

This course made it necessary for them to cut through a range of hills at a point where there was a wide gap.

"When we get to the other side of the gap," said Tony, "we'll be just as far from the agency as we were when we stopped to save Bill Sperry."

Seats in the buckboard were not so comfortable for the Dicks and Harry as seats in their saddles would have been, and they were beginning to feel cramped and tired from their journey.

"Waal," observed Harry, "let's git some'rs whar we kin straddle a hoss. I'm seasoned ter thet kind o' locomotion, an' I ain't ter this."

"It will be close to morning before we reach our destination," said Tony.

"We mustn't run any risks of arriving too late to be of service to your father," spoke up Bertie.

"I'll get you to the agency in time to take care of dad," the girl answered, confidently; "that is, if nothing unforeseen happens to us."

The gap was a gloomy place, dark with the shadows of the hills which arose on either hand.

There were no rocks or stones, but clumps of brush fringed the trail and straggled up the steep sides of the uplifts.

They were all silent; it seemed afterward as though a sense of impending calamity was heavy upon each of them.

When they were about half-way through the gap, both the unforeseen and the unexpected happened, and happened so quickly as to catch them entirely off their guard.

Without warning of any kind, a volley was rained upon them from both sides of the trail.

Every clump of bushes seemed to spit fire.

"I'm hit!" cried Fitzsimmons.

A hoarse bellow of rage escaped the bearded lips of the old Serpent.

He was always wound up for trouble, and the first indication that he was letting himself out was usually given by one of his characteristic defis.

He had barely started in on his defi, this time, when he had to give over and confine his every faculty to a task that was suddenly thrust upon him.

The horses, stung by bullets but not seriously wounded, leaped forward at a terrific pace.

Being unable to hold himself in the buckboard, Fitzsimmons lost his balance and pitched from his seat to the ground.

Neither the Dicks nor Tony saw this, they being on the front seat, the girl driving and the old veteran and the young sport unlimbering with their barkers to left and right.

"Give 'em the whip, Tony!" cried Bertie.

"We must lose no time in getting out of here," old Diamond Dick added.

Holding the lines in one hand and the whip in the other, Tony made the bronchos do their best.

They were shortly out of the gap and beyond the range of their enemies' guns.

"How's Fitz, Harry?" Diamond Dick, Jr., inquired, taking advantage of the first opportunity to

turn around in his seat and give attention to those whom he supposed were behind.

No answer was returned.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the young sport, in a startled tone.

"What's the matter?" queried the old veteran.

"Why, neither Harry nor Fitz is in the wagon!"

Diamond Dick whirled to a face-about and saw that the rear seat was empty.

"How do you account for it?" asked Tony, drawing the horses to a halt for a breathing spell.

"The captain was wounded and fell out of the buckboard," replied Diamond Dick, "and Handsome Harry, who was never known to desert a friend in time of need, jumped after him."

This is precisely what had happened.

"What are we to do?" inquired Tony.

"You and Bertie are to stay here," answered Diamond Dick, springing to the ground. "I'll go back and reconnoiter with a view to finding out what has become of Harry and Fitz."

"You'll be captured!" exclaimed the girl, fearfully.

"Not by the Dwarf," returned Diamond Dick, confidently. "You see to it that you and Tony are not captured, Bertie. I'll rejoin you as soon as I discover what has become of our pards."

CHAPTER V.

RIGHT IN THE "NICK."

Although they had not had time as yet to discuss the matter, the Dicks were fairly certain that they had been made the victims of treachery.

That entire incident in which Sperry was concerned, as it seemed then, was a cleverly worked-up hoax.

The man had posed as a traitor suffering the vengeance of the outlaw chief.

This fact alone would make it reasonable for him to want "revenge," and would pave the way for making the Dick and their friends swallow his whole story.

Thus the travelers in the buckboard were made to forsake the trail over the level ground and pass through a gap where ambush was easy.

That was the way the matter looked to the Dicks, albeit it was not a correct solution of the problem.

Sperry had been really blinded—there was no make-believe about it; and he had been tied to his

horse, wrapped in an oil-soaked blanket, in order that he might meet his doom in as horrible a manner as possible.

What Sperry did not know was that the Dwarf, cunning as his reputation asserted him to be, had posted men to command both trails, the chief himself remaining with those who watched the more likely trail across the plain.

It was almost miraculous that more damage had not been wrought by the fire of the outlaws.

The fact that Dick and his party had not been annihilated could only be accounted for on the supposition that the darkness in the gap had made accurate shooting impossible; and before the ambushed foes could get the range with any precision, the buckboard and its passengers—excepting Fitzsimmons and Harry—had been dragged out of harm's way.

No pursuit had been attempted, and this was something the old veteran could not account for.

Reaching the mouth of the gap, he plunged into the shadow and made his way through the brush toward the scene of the recent shooting.

He found out nothing about the old Serpent and the captain except what he gleaned from a scrap of conversation which he overheard between two men who were sitting on a hummock of earth close by the roadside.

"Blast it!" grumbled one. "Them duffers shot out o' the gap like a streak of greased lightning."

"But they was most of 'em killed. Two fell out'n the wagon an' thar ain't no tellin' how many dead 'uns was kerried along in the buckboard."

"Funny whar them two fellers thet tumbled out'n the wagon went to. They disappeared mighty cur'us like fer dead men."

"They was dead, all right. I wonder ef one of 'em was ole Dimun Dick?"

"I'm hopin' it was. I don't want no truck with thet bunch o' death-an'-deestruction."

"Second the motion. I don't mind tellin' ye, Kaintuck, thet when I heerd the Gov'ment had set the Dicks arter us, I had a blamed big notion ter cut fer other parts."

"Think twice afore ye cut, Rio. Remember what happened ter ole Sperry, an'—"

A piece of brush cracked under old Diamond Dick's foot and the wary Kaintuck made a leap for

the old veteran's dark form which his eyes suddenly encountered.

Old Diamond Dick, alive to the peril of the moment, fetched Kaintuck a sledge-hammer blow that carried him off his feet and laid him on the ground as senseless as a log.

Rio was so surprised that he could make no movement for the fraction of a second; then, leaping up, he hurled himself at Diamond Dick as though shot from a catapult, a bared bowie in his right hand.

A smashing right-hander from the small white fist of the veteran sent the bowie flying; and this blow was followed by another which laid Rio beside his comrade, although not until a wild alarm had escaped his lips.

In answer to Rio's yell there came shouts from the darkness further along the gap, and sounds as of a concerted movement by many men.

Diamond Dick waited no longer, but made a swift return to Bertie and Tony.

Leaping into the back of the buckboard, he dropped down on the rear seat.

"Make for the agency," said he; "there's nothing else we can do."

Tony at once put the horses in motion.

"What did you find out about Harry and Fitz?" asked Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Very little except that they have not yet been captured, in spite of the fact that Fitz was wounded."

"Trust Harry to keep himself out of their hands," said Bertie.

"He'll have the job of his life if he evade capture, hampered as he must be by a wounded man. While a particle of life remains in the captain's body, Harry will never desert him. We must have horses under us, Bertie. The only way we can secure horses is by pushing on to the agency, and by going there we may be able to do Kissane a good turn. After we are mounted we'll give our immediate attention to Harry and Fitz."

Much time had already been consumed in delay, and Tony forced the wiry and mettlesome bronchos to their utmost.

To such good purpose did she drive that they came out of the rough country with the trading post in plain view—the small adobe store breaking on their eyes all at once when they had made a quick turn which carried them out of the chaparral.

A cry that was almost like a sob escaped from Tony's lips.

The scene so abruptly unrolled before her gaze was the cause of it.

In front of the store building there was a freight wagon, the tongue elevated and made secure in its upright position by a guy rope which passed from its top to the endgate of the wagon.

On the ground, at the bottom of the wagon tongue, stood a man with long gray hair and full beard, his hat on the ground. There was a rope about his neck, with the free end passing through a ring near the top of the tongue and then down and into the hands of three toughs of the frontier variety.

In the wagon stood El Malo Muchacho, otherwise the Black Dwarf, perching there like a great, overgrown toad and looking utterly unlike anything of the human species.

A diabolical grin was on his swarthy and hideous face.

"It's dad," wailed Tony, her hands shaking. "They're going to string him up."

"No, they're not," said Diamond Dick, sharply. "Take the lines, Bertie, and drive for the scene. Come up behind the house and escape observation, if you can."

The young sport took the lines out of Tony's nerveless hands and drove rapidly.

By a deft maneuver, he placed the buckboard and team at the backs of all who were participating in the little drama in front of the trading post, and shortly reached a position where the adobe hut interposed between them and the buckboard.

Then young Diamond Dick used the whip, hoofs and wheels making little noise in the soft sand, and the passengers in the vehicle preserving strict silence.

It was evident that they had arrived right in the nick of time.

On darting around the house, the bronchos were brought to a halt with a quick jerk.

Not until that moment did the outlaws discover the presence of the Dicks.

In a flash, the three passengers were out of the buckboard and racing toward the freight wagon.

"Dad!" cried Tony, hurrying toward her father, Bertie following her closely.

"Tonita!" gasped Kissane, astounded and almost overwhelmed by the unexpected aid which fate had brought him.

Each of the toughs tossed a hand toward his hip, and the Dwarf, bending quickly, brought up a Winchester from somewhere about his feet and leveled it at the heart of the young sport.

"You escaped the side-winder," he screamed, "but here's a rattler of another kind! Dodge this if you kin!"

"I'll kill the first man that pulls a trigger!" shouted old Diamond Dick.

The veteran had a forty-four in each hand, and if ever he meant business in his life he meant it then.

CHAPTER VI.

HAND-TO-HAND.

The voice of the old veteran, ringing with unmistakable emphasis, brought a momentary pause in proceedings.

But the pause was the moment of calm preceding a storm and old Diamond Dick was too wary a hand to be deceived by it.

His keen eyes were on every one of the outlaws, and especially did they mark the crooked body of El Malo Muchacho.

He noted the quick light that flared in the hunchback's murky eyes and the flexing of the forefinger on the trigger of the rifle.

"Hyer's fer ye, Dimun Dick, Jr.!" the Black Dwarf ground out between his yellowish teeth.

The Winchester was fired and so was one of old Diamond Dick's forty-fours—the revolver shot forestalling the hoarser report of the heavier firearm by the tenth part of a second and both sounds gliding into one.

But Diamond Dick's quickness saved the young sport's life.

Muchacho's left arm, which supported the rifle, was struck and the gun deflected just as the slug left its muzzle.

As a consequence, the bullet "plunked" into the ground at Bertie's feet.

With hoarse shouts of rage, the three bravos let go their hold of the rope and dashed around the wagon to come to close quarters with the veteran.

Tony sprang to her father, pulled the noose apart and flung it from his neck.

Diamond Dick, Jr., without loss of an instant, had taken advantage of the wound given the Dwarf, and had climbed into the wagon.

"Kill 'em!" screeched the hunchback, his ugly

face contorted with fury. "They're the Dicks! The Government has hired 'em ter track us down like coyotes! Kill 'em, or they'll kill us."

El Muchacho had not dropped his gun, but Bertie was within arm's length, and so close that the weapon could not be fired advantageously.

Whirling the rifle around his head with his right hand, his left arm hanging useless at his side, the Dwarf sought to slay the young sport at one terrific blow.

Bertie ducked down and sideways, but the stock of the Winchester caught him a glancing blow on the shoulder, and so great was the force put forth by the hunchback that Bertie's entire side seemed for a moment to be paralyzed.

But the very force which El Muchacho had put into the blow contributed to his own undoing.

The rifle stock, not meeting the resistance the Dwarf had calculated upon, glanced upward into the air, and the weapon flew from its wielder's hand.

El Muchacho lost his balance and pitched from the wagon, his head striking heavily against the iron tire of the wagon.

Full upon the crooked form of the hunchback dropped the young sport, turned him upon his face and roped his hands behind him and tied his feet at the ankles, using a riata that lay in the wagon.

Nor did the young sport give the Dwarf any ordinary tie-up, but used the entire forty feet of the tough rawhide rope.

When Diamond Dick, Jr., had finished, the terror of Northern Arizona was as helpless as a babe in arms.

His own work done, Bertie turned to render the old veteran what assistance he might.

But no assistance was needed in that quarter.

The game old fighter stood with one hand clasping the elevated wagon tongue, the three outlaws who had engaged him lying at his feet.

One was dead, a second sorely wounded by a revolver ball and the third, clasping an ensanguined bowie in his hands, had been knocked senseless and lay with his face upturned, the hilt of his knife still gripped in his convulsive fingers.

Somewhat apart, Kissane was sitting on the ground, his gray head against the bosom of his daughter, who knelt beside him.

"Are you all right, Diamond Dick?" queried Bertie.

The veteran attempted to speak, and then to flutter his hand.

Another moment and he had sank to his knees, then to a sitting posture, with his back against the inner side of one of the front wheels.

The young sport ran to him.

"The fellow with the knife caught me one in the back before I could take care of him," Diamond Dick whispered; then added, noting the alarm visible in Bertie's face: "It's not so bad as you think. A swallow of whisky if you can get it for me. First, though, secure that rascal with the bowie. We may need him."

"Is Diamond Dick killed?" asked Tony, leaving her father and coming toward Bertie. "They hanged dad two or three times, and all but took the life out of him. But he wouldn't give 'em the combination, he wouldn't tell."

Recent experiences had proved almost too much for the girl's nerves, trained though they were.

"It's all right, Tony," returned young Diamond Dick, in a quick voice. "The old veteran is badly wounded, I fear, but the hurt is not mortal. If you know where there is some whisky, please get it. Be as quick as you can. A swallow of liquor would help your father as well as Diamond Dick."

Bertie started to remove the rope that had been threaded through the ring at the upper end of the wagon tongue.

"Leave that, Bertie," said Diamond Dick, "and find another."

Bertie wondered at the old veteran's request, but soon found another rope and quickly secured the man who was lying on the ground, first forcing the knife from his convulsive grasp.

Meanwhile Tony had brought the whisky and a draught had greatly revived the strength of old Diamond Dick.

With great solicitude, the girl had then removed the old veteran's coat, and, with a strip of linen brought from the house, was making ready to bandage the hurt.

Bertie, by that time, was able to give Diamond Dick his attention.

The wound was in the fleshy part of the veteran's right side, not of a very serious character, but it had let much blood and thus proven a source of weakness.

Under the young sport's skillful fingers, the flow of blood was staunched and the hurt bandaged.

Diamond Dick's coat was then replaced, and he got slowly to his feet.

Single-handed, Diamond Dick had fought and won his battle against the three ruffians, Tony having been occupied with the care of her father, and thus unable to help.

Yet, had the girl been able to give her aid, it would have amounted to little, for her nerves had gone back on her completely. Now, however, her hardy nature was beginning to reassert itself, and she was of much assistance.

Kissane, a livid mark about his neck where the rope had drawn, came slowly to the place where old Diamond Dick was standing and thrust out his hand.

"Mr. Wade," said he, "I am indebted to you for my life."

"We are all of us indebted to him for our lives," spoke up Tony, as her father and the veteran exchanged a cordial handclasp. "If Diamond Dick had not taken care of those three men, Bertie"—she flushed a little when she realized how she was referring to the young sport—"would not have been able to complete his capture of El Muchacho."

"It was a tussle the like of which I have not had for many a day," admitted the veteran. "While I was shooting one man the second engaged me. The first fight became a clinch, and while we were at it, collar and elbow, the third man used his knife from behind. By an effort—I hardly know how, wounded as I was—I threw the second man from me and brought my revolver to bear. The second man was wounded, as you see him there, and I whirled just in time to knock the third and last man down with my forty-four."

"Only one man could have done such a thing as that," said young Diamond Dick, with a touch of pride in his voice, "and that was Diamond Dick of Ouray."

The veteran turned his eyes on Bertie with a quiet smile—a smile of deprecation and indulgence.

"It was wonderful, wonderful," murmured Kissane.

"And to think," spoke up Tony, in a voice of self-reproach, "I might have taken a hand and saved Diamond Dick that wound, but I—I——"

"You are a woman," said Diamond Dick, as the girl faltered, "and it is not to be expected that you should have acted a man's part."

"That is no excuse for me!" exclaimed the girl.

"I think it is," put in Bertie, flashing Tony a glance that made her cheeks redden and her eyes droop.

"I understand that you had barricaded yourself in the house," went on Diamond Dick, addressing the agent. "If that is true, how came these four men to get the upper hand of you?"

"I was barricaded in the store," replied Kissane, "but everything seemed so quiet that I was deceived and ventured out to go to the spring for a pail of water. It was then that El Muchacho and his braves set upon me.

"I was overborne, stripped of my weapons, and asked by the Dwarf whether I was going to reveal the combination of the safe.

"When I refused, they brought me to this wagon, raised the tongue as you see it, and lifted me into the air.

"I was nearly choked after they had lowered me, but I was resolved to die before I would give up the information. I knew very well that they would kill me after they got the information, anyway, providing I gave it to them, so I was fully determined that they should have no satisfaction whatever.

"They raised me into the air three times, and I was so weak and dizzy that I could hardly stand.

"Had they raised me the fourth time, I should have died, so your arrival, Diamond Dick, was timely, to say the least.

"I shall never forget the debt of gratitude I owe you."

"Nor I," added Tony, and her bright eyes wandered from the old veteran to the young sport.

It was plainly to be seen that her gratitude applied to both of the Dicks.

"I can hardly believe that El Malo Muchacho, the man who has terrorized these parts for so long, has at last been captured, and in so signal a manner," said Kissane, as he and Diamond Dick passed to the place where the outlaw leader was lying.

El Muchacho had recovered from the stunning effects of his fall from the wagon, and a light of diabolical hatred was burning in his murky eyes.

As the Dicks approached him, he showed his teeth in a snarl of fury like a serpent unlicking its fangs.

His evil face was a hideous sight, and it is small wonder that Tony turned her back with a shudder.

"You are at the end of your tether, Muchacho,"

observed Diamond Dick, studying the hunchback much as he would have studied a captive tarantula.

Curses and oaths were the hunchback's only response.

"Enough of that," cried the old veteran, sternly. "I have to ask you if you will reveal the place where that safe with the annuity money is hidden?"

More oaths came from the lips of El Muchacho, and the veteran, disgusted, told Bertie to gag him.

This was instantly done.

While Bertie was about it, the tired bronchos attached to the buckboard, lifted their heads and sniffed the air in the direction of the chaparral.

One of them whinnied, and an instant answer was returned in kind.

"What is over there?" queried Dick of Kissane.

"The spring is over there," replied the agent.

"And that is where you were captured?"

"Yes."

The veteran turned to the young sport.

"There should be the four horses of the outlaws in the chaparral, Bertie," said he. "Please go over there, get them and bring them here."

As Diamond Dick, Jr., started on his errand, he halted at the side of the man who had used the knife.

"What is to be done with this fellow?" he asked.

"Bring the horses," answered Dick, "and I'll show you."

CHAPTER VII.

LOCATING THE SAFE.

Young Diamond Dick had no difficulty in finding the four mounts which had been ridden by the outlaws.

When he got back, riding one horse and leading the other three, he saw that the man who had wounded Diamond Dick had been lifted into a standing position at the bottom of the wagon tongue in the identical spot where Kissane had stood, such a short time before.

"Who are you?" Diamond Dick inquired.

"None o' yer bloomin' bizness!" was the ruffian's surly answer.

"Do you know where this stolen safe has been cached?"

"Bet yer life! Au' I'll let ye cut out my heart afore I tell ye whar it is."

Fierce exultation showed itself in the eyes of the

gagged hunchback. Here, it seemed, was a man worthy of his leader.

"You can't object to a little of the same treatment you gave Kissane," was Diamond Dick's cool comment as he pulled the dangling noose over the outlaw's head.

The veteran turned to the girl.

"Tony," he continued, "take those three horses Bertie is holding and make them fast to the wagon."

The girl obeyed.

"Hitch the end of that rope to your saddle, Bertie."

Diamond Dick, Jr., carried out his instructions.

"Draw it taut."

Bertie spurred the horse a few steps and took the slack out of the riata.

"What's your name?" inquired Diamond Dick, addressing the prisoner again.

"Jud Lane," returned the ruffian.

"Well, Jud Lane, will you tell us where that steel chest containing the annuity money is cached?"

"Never!"

The old veteran waved his hand to the young sport.

Diamond Dick, Jr., understood exactly what was intended of him, and Tony, knowing what was coming, went into the house, not caring to witness the spectacle.

This move of the girl's earned her the added respect of the Dick's.

By a singular coincidence, the young sport was mounted on Jud Lane's horse.

The animal was spurred half-a-dozen steps forward, and Jud Lane was swung clear of the ground, twisting and writhing in every limb.

A moment or two was allowed to elapse and then the old veteran gave another signal.

Bertie backed the horse and the outlaw's feet came down to the earth once more.

When the prisoner had recovered his breath, Diamond Dick proceeded with his questioning, this time taking another tack.

"Did you capture Handsome Harry and Fitzsimmons?"

"I don't know nothin' about Handsome Harry or Fitzsimmons."

"Weren't you ambushed in the gap?"

"Naw. Muchacho an' us fellers was along the other trail."

Diamond Dick began to understand about the ambush.

From what he had overheard between Rio and Kaintuck, in the gap, he had already come to the conclusion that Sperry had not played a desperate double game, but had really been treated as a traitor.

Now the old veteran knew that men had been posted along both trails, and surmised that Sperry had known nothing about the double ambush.

"Where is this chest of money?" the veteran continued, relentlessly.

"Ye kin choke the life out o' me afore I'll tell!"

"Once more, Bertie."

Again the young sport rode the horse ahead and lifted Jud Lane clear of the ground.

He was allowed to swing a little longer this time, and when he was again lowered it was a considerable period before he could regain his breath.

He had weakened, also.

Diamond Dick had shown himself as relentless against his prisoner as El Muchacho and his men had shown themselves against Kissane.

"You're in your prime, Lane," remarked Diamond Dick. "You can see how this treatment wears on you and, mayhap, can imagine how hard it would be on a gray-haired man like Kissane. But you showed Kissane no mercy, and I will show you none. Where is the box?"

"I—I—I—"

The outlaw closed his lips tightly.

"Where is it?"

Jud Lane merely glared like a coyote brought to bay.

Diamond Dick turned toward Bertie.

"Don't, don't!" pleaded the outlaw.

"Where is the box with the money, then?" the veteran queried, turning back.

"Under the white stone in the gap."

An incoherent raving came from behind El Muchacho's gag and his face was like that of a demon.

Jud Lane looked toward his chief and shivered from head to foot; finally he averted his eyes.

"Where is the white rock?"

"Midway of the gap, to the north of the trail."

At that juncture Tony ran out of the house.

"Some one is coming," said she, and pointed toward a horseman galloping out of the chaparral over in the direction of the spring.

Diamond Dick whirled about and saw that the man was carrying a white handkerchief bound about the muzzle of his rifle.

When well out of the undergrowth, the horseman rode the peace sign, and the veteran raised his hand palm outward.

The answering signal meant that the truce was accepted, and the horseman spurred forward at a lively gait.

CHAPTER VIII.

BERTIE PLANS A RAID.

When within speaking distance, the man with the white flag reined in his horse.

He bore the unmistakable stamp of the outlaw and the renegade, manifested not only in face and manner, but in the very way he sat his big, raw-boned horse, as well.

"Keep that gun across your saddle in front of you!" commanded Diamond Dick, sternly.

"It's a fair an' squar' palaver I'm arter," growled the man.

"I'll see that it isn't anything but fair and square," retorted Diamond Dick. "Lay your gun across your horse's withers. Make one treacherous move and you'll be killed before you can move a dozen feet on the back track."

Down came the gun as directed.

"What do you want?" the veteran demanded.

"Ye've captered El Muchacho, hev'n't ye?"

"Do you know El Muchacho when you see him?"

"Shore."

"Then your eyes ought to be able to answer your question."

The messenger gave a surly grunt.

"How'd ye like ter make an exchange?"

"What kind of an exchange?"

"Why, trade El Muchacho an' t'other tlfree fer two pris'ners thet we've took."

"Not on yer life!" muttered Jud Lane, in frantic appeal. "Arter what ye've forced me ter tell ye, ef I was set free with El Muchacho he'd put me ter the torture an' kill me by inches!"

"What prisoners have you taken?" Diamond Dick asked, giving no heed to Lane's words.

"Han'sum Harry an' Cap'n Fitzsimmons."

The Dicks were startled.

This man was evidently from the party in the gap.

"Have you captured Handsome Harry and Captain Fitzsimmons?"

"We couldn't very well offer an exchange ef we hadn't."

"What are your terms?"

"El Muchacho an' t'other three fer the two we got."

"One of the other three has passed out of the game."

"Wall, fer t'other two, then. An' ye're to agree ter leave the kentry an' give up trailin' El Muchacho an' his gang."

"You want the big end of the deal."

"Goin' ter liev it, too, or send yore pards acrost the divide."

"How did you men know we had caught El Muchacho?"

"I started fer hyer with Quip Haley, who bosses the gang under the Dwarf. Quip is over in the chaparral, now, waitin' ter hear from me as ter whether ye accept the plan fer exchange er not."

"I'll have to think about it," Diamond Dick answered.

"Well, this is what Quip says: Ye got ter accept afore one o'clock ter-day or yore pards aire done fer."

"Where will I send word to Haley?"

"Over at the gap."

The old veteran was silent for a few moments.

Then he said:

"If Haley will remove all his men to the eastern side of the gap, excepting himself and you, I will send this man here"—Dick indicated Lane—"and one other either to make a counter proposition or to accept or reject the terms you propose."

"Whar'll we meet the fellers ye send?"

"Isn't there a white rock in the gap?"

"Shore; an' it's about the only rock ye kin find thar."

"Well, the men I send will meet you and Haley there."

"Will you be one o' the men thet comes, Dimun Dick?"

"Not much!"

"Who'll come?"

"Lane there and another. If you attempt treachery I will know of it, and it will be the worse for you. You and Haley are to be alone in the gap, and at the white rock, at noon to-day."

"Supposin' you try some skullduggery?"

"All you and Haley have to do is to watch. If you see more than two men coming, simply retreat."

This seemed reasonable enough.

"Keno," said the messenger. "I'll ride back to the brush an' tell Quip. Ef we shake this white rag from over thar, ye'll know thet Quip's agreeable."

Thereupon the messenger wheeled his horse, used his spurs, and darted away.

"I'm a goner ef ye accept them terms," growled Jud Lane. "Ye've forced me ter tell what I know an'——"

"Wait," went on Diamond Dick. "You have probably sacrificed your life, if El Muchacho ever gets loose, but if you will do as I propose, and act the square part, you shall have your freedom, no matter whether your leader goes free or not."

"There's the flag," said Diamond Dick.

A speck of white could be seen shaken vigorously against the green background of the chaparral.

"That means," said Diamond Dick, "that Lane and another are to meet Quip Haley and the messenger at white rock in the gap—at the place where the safe with the annuity money is cached."

The young sport's face lighted up.

He was beginning to get an inkling of the veteran's plans.

"It was a strange bargain for you to make, Mr. Wade," said Kissane, who had been an amazed listener to the colloquy between the messenger and Diamond Dick.

"You would not think it so strange if you knew all," answered the old veteran.

"Who is to be the man who accompanies Jud Lane?" asked young Diamond Dick.

"But for this wound of mine," the veteran answered, "I should be the one. As the wound might interfere with my usefulness, you will have to go in my stead, Bertie."

"It will be death for young Diamond Dick," cried Tony.

"I think not."

"They will be anxious to get hold of him, and ——"

"They won't get hold of him, Tony," interrupted the veteran. "Bertie will accompany Lane, disguised as that wounded man."

"Lane will tell on him when they meet Quip Haley and the other outlaw," persisted the girl.

"Not if he values his life, Tony," spoke up the young sport.

"It will be an opportunity, Bertie," said the old veteran, "for you to recover the money and possibly to effect the release of Harry and Fitzsimmons."

"I'll do the best I can," said Bertie.

Preparations were immediately begun for Diamond Dick, Jr.'s raid into the lines of the enemy.

El Muchacho and the wounded man were removed into the house and the latter was there provided with a suit of Kissane's, while Bertie drew the outlaw's garb over his own clothes.

To further heighten the effect of the disguise, and to still further conceal Diamond Dick, Jr.'s identity, a bandage was wrapped about his face. His left arm was also suspended in a sling.

Two of the best horses were then selected out of the bunch of five, riatas forming part of the saddle equipments.

After that Diamond Dick drew the cartridges from Jud Lane's guns, took all the ammunition from his belt, and ordered him to thrust the harmless weapons back in their holsters.

Young Diamond Dick thereupon mounted his horse, immediately after which Lane was freed of his bonds and made to mount the remaining animal.

Before the start was commenced the old veteran placed himself where he could give Lane a square look in the eyes, and said:

"You're completely at the mercy of Diamond Dick, Jr., Lane. He will ride behind you and within a horse's length of you all the way between this and the gap.

"His hand, as you will notice, is suspended in a sling. Hidden in the folds of the cloth, young Diamond Dick has one of his forty-fours, and the muzzle will be trained upon you all the time, and a single move in the direction of treachery will seal your doom."

"After Haley and the other man are met, at the white rock, you will have an opportunity to help Bertie, or to take part against him. If you decide to do the latter, you will be the first man he will shoot. If, on the other hand, you decide to help him, and if you obey his every order, when your work and his are done you will be given your freedom. It is for you to make your choice."

Diamond Dick stepped back and fixed his eyes on Bertie's.

The old veteran had no hesitation in sending the young sport forth on his perilous mission, for he knew the youth better than any one else could possibly know him.

But there was a warning flashed from eye to eye—a subtle caution to be discreet and wary—then Diamond Dick stepped back and waved his hand.

"Good-by, Bertie, and good luck," said he.

And the two raiders were away at speed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RAID.

Jud Lane seemed inclined to make the best of the situation into which fate had shuffled him.

He stood before his leader and one of his comrades a self-confessed traitor, and with the example of Bill Sperry before his eyes he was not at all eager to face a traitor's punishment as administered by El Malo Muchacho.

The outlaw gave young Diamond Dick no trouble whatever, but this fact did not make the young sport any less wary.

"Ye might ride up alongside an' be sociable," Lane said, more than once.

But Bertie invariably answered him with a curt: "You ride on ahead and I'll manage this end of the procession."

Diamond Dick, Jr., knew that the fellow was not to be trusted.

"What is the name of that wounded man whose clothes I'm wearing?" Bertie asked of Lane, as they were drawing near the entrance to the gap.

"Dunno what his real name was," replied the outlaw, "but us fellers called him Hassayamp."

"How long has he been with the gang?"

"Not more'n a couple o' days. It was him as brought word to El Muchacho thet the Gov'ment had given Dimun Dick the job o' runnin' us down."

"Does Quip Haley know the fellow by sight?"

"I don't reckon he does."

"Nor any of the others with Haley?"

"I wouldn't sw'ar to't, one way or t'other. Hassayamp not bein' with the gang long, makes it kinder nateral thet he wouldn't be familiar with the fellers thet come over ter the gap under Quip Haley's bossin'."

As they came nearer the entrance to the gap, Bertie managed to make out a horse and rider standing

out in bold relief against the sky on a spur of the hills.

"Thet feller's on the watch fer us," commented Jud Lane. "He's sizin' us up all the time."

Suddenly the horseman wheeled and vanished from the ridge.

"And now he's gone to tell Quip Haley that we're coming," observed Bertie. "Remember, Lane," added the young sport, "if you try to betray me, I'll get you if I die for it."

"I ain't a-goin' ter fergit thet, you bet. On t'other hand, ef I help ye out of a hole, don't ye go an' fergit thet, nuther."

"I won't."

Shortly after this they entered the gap and rode along it in the direction of the white rock.

All was silence in the defile, and not a sound could be heard aside from the tramp of their horses' hoofs.

"We're gittin' close to the rock," observed Jud Lane, in a low tone.

"Make right for it just as though neither of us had a thing to fear," answered Bertie.

Presently Lane turned from the trail and they began an ascent of the bush-covered hillside.

In a few moments they came within sight of a huge white boulder, half buried in the earth, and presenting a smooth face like a wall built into the slope.

The rock was a dozen feet high and perhaps as many broad, with low bushes fringing its base.

"Howdy, Jud," cried a voice, as a lanky individual, with a scar-seamed face pushed into view. "What fer kind of a how-de-do d'ye call this hyer, anyways?"

"Thet beats me plum ter death, Quip," answered Lane.

Quip Haley was on foot, and he had more guns and dirks about him than the old-time pirates used to carry.

"Who's this with ye? One of our boys?"

As Haley put the question he sized Bertie up in a critical way.

"Shore it's one of our lads," answered Jud Lane. "Hassayamp. Ain't ye heered o' him?"

"I ain't expectin' ye'd know me," struck in Diamond Dick, Jr., assuming a hoarse tone that would harmonize with his rôle of outlaw, "seein' as how I only j'ined up with the gang so recent. But ef the doin's we had this mornin', over ter the agency,

is any sort o' sample o' what I'm ter expect, I jes' as lieve quit yer gang cold, right hyer."

"Whar's yer nerve?" demanded Quip Haley.

"Cut ter pieces, by thunder! by thet 'ar Diming Dick."

"You fellers must hev had a deuce of a time over thet-a-way."

"It was every feller fer himself, an' don't ye fergit it."

Jud Lane subsided into the background and let Bertie do the talking.

"Wall, I'll hear all about it one o' these days. Jest now, though, we got bizness ter transact. What did thet ole fernomenon tell you fellers ter tell me about thet exchange?"

"Ole Diming Dick is kinder suspicious-like."

"Suspicious-like o' what?"

"He thinks mebby ye're operatin' yer bazoo with two tongues, Quip, an' thet ye ain't got the two pris'ners ye say ye hev."

"He'll hev ter take my word fer it," growled Haley, with an oath.

"Nary he won't. He's suggested a way thet we kin prove it ter him."

"What way is thet?"

"I'm ter take back the old Sarpint's revolver belt an' half-a-dozen buttons off'n his clo's."

"Thet's easy enough."

"Shore. Easy enough ef ye've reely got the ole sockdologer."

"I wasn't doin' no stringin'. Ride over hyer."

Quip Haley pushed into the brush a short distance.

Bertie and Jud Lane followed, the former still keeping the rear, and, when Haley halted, he waved his hand toward Harry and the captain who were lying on the ground with the outlaw, who had acted as messenger sitting between them, his rifle across his knees. The captain's leg was bandaged up, and he had evidently been badly wounded.

In the background four horses were tethered.

"Ye see," chuckled Quip Haley, I wasn't expectin' two of our gang ter come an' I was all prepared ter prove ter Dimun Dick's man thet we had the pris'ners, jest as I said."

"Ye blame coyote!" said Handsome Harry, through his teeth. "Ef I had the use o' my fists fer about sixty howlin' seconds I'd make ye look like a tornader had juggled with ye."

"Of course you would, but you ain't goin' ter hev the use o' yer fists, sabe?"

Harry was roped wrist and ankle.

The captain's hands were tied.

He wore a blood-stained bandage, just below one knee, and that was the reason, no doubt; why his ankles had been left unsecured.

"Thar ye aire, Hassayamp," remarked Quip Haley to Bertie. "Cut off all the buttons ye want an' take the ole Sarpint's belt."

"What you bloomin' ijuts tryin' ter do?" demanded the Californian.

"We're tryin' ter exchange you two fellers fer the Dwarf an' another of the gang."

"Who's captered the Dwarf?"

"The Dimun Dicks had a hand-ter-hand fight with El Muchacho, and three of his gang, an' won out."

"Whoop-ya!" jubilated Harry, who could find delight in the doings of his pards no matter how hardly luck had gone against himself. "Hyer thet, Fitz? The ole war-hoss, an' the son of his dad went ag'in the Dwarf an' got him on the mat! Wake up, snakes, an' tune harps!"

"It seems too good to be true!" exclaimed Fitzsimmons.

"It's good fer you fellers," went on Haley. "Ef somethin' like thet hadn't happened you'd be connectin' with yer finish about now."

"Ole Diming Dick won't make no exchange," whooped Harry; "I won't hev it."

"Yes, he will, ef he knows when he's well off. Go on, Hassayamp, an' git the belt an' them buttons. We don't want ter lose any more time at this game than we hev ter."

The messenger got up from between the two prisoners and walked over toward Jud Lane and began talking to him.

The time had come for the young sport to act, and to act quickly.

He could no longer keep behind Lane and cover him with the gun hidden in the folds of the sling.

If Lane was at all inclined to prove treacherous that was the place for him to get in his work; and the only possible way for the young sport to backcap him was to free Harry and get the redoubtable old Serpent to help in the fight that was to come.

"All right, Quip," said Diamond Dick, Jr., as he slipped to the ground and took a knife in his right hand.

Advancing to Harry's side, he knelt down beside him.

Then he began cutting off buttons.

Both the man who had served as messenger and Quip Haley were talking with Jud Lane and apparently oblivious of everything that Bertie was doing.

"Harry," said Bertie, in a tense whisper, and scarcely moving his lips, "can Fitz ride?"

"On a pinch," returned Handsome Harry, almost choked with astonishment at finding his little pard disguised as an outlaw and working such a game as he was at that moment.

"I'm going to cut you loose," proceeded Diamond Dick, Jr., "and when your hands are free grab the shooter out of this sling in which I am holding my left hand. Don't shoot the man who came with me, nor either of the others, if you can help it. Turn over, quick!"

Harry rolled over on his side and Bertie slashed the knife through the ropes that secured his hands.

"What in blazes——" began Quip Haley, suddenly discovering what young Diamond Dick was up to.

Haley did not finish the remark he had partly uttered.

Instead, he jerked a revolver from his belt and would have turned loose a bullet at Bertie, point-blank, had not Jud Lane grabbed the weapon out of his hand.

"What d'ye mean, Quip?" flared Jud Lane. "Ye ain't goin' ter shoot Hassayamp, aire ye?"

"Looky thar at what Hassayamp's doin'. Blazes ter blazes an' six hands 'round! I b'leeve ye're both in this thing, Lane! Jackson, give it to 'em er we're up a stump!"

By this time the young sport had freed the old Serpent's feet and he was up and going for Quip Haley and Jackson hammer-and-tongs, using his revolver, quickly drawn from the cloth about Bertie's neck, as a club.

"Now, ye varmint," he whooped, "I reckon ye'll dance ter Han'sum Harry's tune! Didn't think ther son of his dad could play it on ye, eh? Wake up, snakes, an' git restless! Jumpin' sandhills, how I've been sufferin' fer this hyer chance ter come! Whoop-ya! Ain't this a corker? A reg'lar double-X eye-opener, thet's what it is. Thar, Jackson, is an eye-shutter fer you, howsumever. I'm evenin' up, d'ye hear? Seventeen rattles an' a button an' they're all

buzzin' fer gle-ory! Whoop-ee! Consarn ye, Haley, what did ye mean by thet?"

The cause of Handsome Harry's question was a quick move on the part of El Muchacho's lieutenant, who pulled another of his many sixshooters and emptied it into the air.

"It's a signal to the rest o' the gang," said Jud Lane. "Ef we wind this deal up with any satisfaction to ourselves we got ter be at it."

"Here, Lane," cried Bertie who had cut the captain's hands free and lifted the officer to a standing position, "bear a hand over here and help me get the captain into his saddle."

Lane hurried to Bertie's aid. The captain, in spite of his wound, mounted quickly.

As Lane passed Haley, with whom Harry was mixing things up most beautifully, Haley let drive with a knife straight at his breast.

A blow from Harry's clubbed revolver struck Haley's arm aside.

"Blast ye fer a traitor, Lane!" yelled Haley, and that was his last remark for some time, for the old Serpent struck him down.

Both Jackson and Haley were now on the retired list.

"Tie them to their horses," cried Diamond Dick, Jr. "Hustle, old pard, for the rest of the gang will be down on us *my pronto*."

Handsome Harry lifted the unconscious Haley and laid him on the back of one of the horses, tying him there with the same ropes Bertie had cut from his own limbs.

While Harry was about this, Diamond Dick, Jr., and Jud Lane were treating Jackson exactly as the Californian was treating Haley.

Then it was that the rumble of hoofs, dashing down the gap, came to their ears.

"Into the saddle, Harry," cried the young sport, "and lead Haley's horse; Fitz, you can lead Jackson's animal. Off with you! We'll join you presently. No questions, old pard. Lane and I have still some pressing business to transact."

All this work had been put through with the utmost dispatch.

The fight, what there was of it, was over almost before it was fairly started; all the rest was mere mechanical execution, and carried out swiftly.

As Harry and Fitz started for the trail, leading the

horses with the two prisoners, Diamond Dick, Jr., and Jud Lane pushed back toward the white rock.

"What now?" panted Jud Lane, both astonished and surprised at the hurricane hustle which the young sport had got on for this especial occasion.

"We mustn't forget the safe!" said Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Thunder! It weighs a hundred pounds! We kain't kerry it!"

"Yes, we can! We've got to. Where is it?"

"Here."

Jud Lane went down on his knees, thrust his hand in among the brush that fringed the base of the rock and drew out a square steel bow which had an iron handle in each end.

"Do as I do," commanded Bertie.

Jerking the riata from the horn of one of the saddles, he shook out the coils and looped the rope around the pommel.

The two ends he made fast to one of the iron handles.

Lane was not slow in getting his cue and finished his part of the work but a few moments after Diamond Dick, Jr., was through.

"Now into your saddle!" called Bertie.

They sprang at once to their horses' backs.

"Pull up the rope until we're ten feet apart and the safe swings between us!"

That was the young sport's next order; and when the steel box was in the position indicated the ropes were made securely fast to the pommels.

Then Bertie and Lane were ready, and began a galloping descent of the hill, the safe swinging between them.

The horsemen who were coming in answer to the signal fired by Haley, had left the trail and were angling upward toward the white rock.

As they angled to the northwest Bertie and Lane angled to the southwest, and the two latter were in the trail with a clear path for flight ahead of them before the outlaws discovered their presence.

"Thar they go!"

"They're runnin' off with the box!"

"Ketch 'em!"

"Thunderation! It's Jud Lane!"

"An' Hassayamp!"

Diamond Dick, Jr., heard these shouts and they gave him an idea.

"We'll draw rein, Lane," said Bertie, "and you'll

call back to those fellows that the Dicks have raided us. Tell them to chase eastward along the gap and out across the plain to draw off the Dicks and enable us to escape with the money!"

The trick was carried out, and with the utmost success.

There were five of the outlaws, and they were all more or less bewildered by recent events.

The very mention of the Dicks carried a panic into their ranks, and they did not pause an instant to debate the question of a retreat to the eastward.

As the beat of their horses' hoofs died away along the gap, Jud Lane turned to the young sport.

"Young Dimun Dick," said he, "you're a corker, an' up purty nigh the head of the column."

"Much obliged," answered Bertie. "You carried yourself pretty well, Lane, and I could work up a little admiration for you but for one thing."

"What's that?"

"The knife thrust you gave old Diamond Dick. Don't say anything about that before Handsome Harry or the result might be disastrous to your health."

Jud Lane was silent.

"Just as soon as we join Harry and Fitz," Bertie resumed, "I'll have Harry exchange horses with you. When that's done, you can go your way and we'll go ours. I consider that you have earned your freedom. If you can lead an honest life after this, do it. You'll find it pays."

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Handsome Harry and the captain, riding slowly with their prisoners and keeping a wary watch behind, were overtaken by Bertie and Jud Lane just beyond the entrance to the gap.

Bertie's first act was to cause Harry and Lane to exchange horses, the Californian leading the mount Haley was riding on the side opposite that on which the safe was swinging.

Lane, as soon as he was in the other saddle, gave the young sport a square look.

"I'm goin' ter foller yer advice ter the letter, young Dimun Dick," said he, and spurred off without another word.

"What in the howlin' blazes hev ye got thar, son?" demanded Harry, pointing to the safe.

"The box with the annuity money," replied Bertie.

Harry leaned over to shake hands with the son of his dad across the swinging safe, but the distance was too great.

"We'll have to take the will for the deed, old pard," said Bertie, laughing.

"Not twenty-four hours out o' Wolpi," crowed Harry, "an' the money recovered an' the Black Dwarf a pris'ner—say nothin' o' these hyer two fellers."

"It's marvelous!" exclaimed the captain. "Egad, it was worth a wound in the leg to see how the Dicks go about this outlaw-hunting business."

"Never hev no time ter spare," jubilated Handsome Harry; "jest put their kibosh on yer gun-fanner while ye wait. But looky hyer once, pardy, who's the rough-an'-ready chap thet jest left us?"

"A reformed outlaw."

"Catamounts an' hyeners! He looks the part, though. An' he saved yer life, I reckon, back thar in the gap."

"He may have saved my scalp, Harry, but it wasn't so long ago when he came within an ace of taking old Diamond Dick's."

"What?"

The laugh died out of the old Serpent's face and he wore an expression of the deepest concern.

"That brings us up to our experiences," said Bertie, "and I reckon that both of us have something to tell."

"Hadn't we better quicken our speed a little?" put in the captain, looking behind. "The rest of those outlaws must be after us."

"No, captain," returned Bertie, "they are going east, on the other side of the hills, as fast as they can peg along. I'll tell you about it. The trip before us is a long one and the recital will serve to pass the time."

Thereupon the young sport narrated the doings in the gap, directly after the ambushed outlaws had opened fire on the buckboard and its passengers; then he told of the discovery that Harry and Fitz were not in the wagon; how old Diamond Dick had crept back to reconnoiter, but had learned little of importance; how they had pushed on to the agency and rescued Kissane; how Quip Haley and Jackson had come to effect an exchange of prisoners and to

secure a promise from the Dicks to give up the pursuit of El Muchaco and leave the country; how the old veteran had planned the ruse which carried Bertie back to the gap and to the neighborhood of the white rock, and, finally, how that "raid" had been engineered up to the time Harry and Fitzsimmons were released, and what had happened after they had left with their two prisoners.

It was a thrilling recital, and not only did Harry and Fitz listen with all their attention, but Jackson and Haley likewise made it a point to lose not a word.

"There's no use talking, it's wonderful the way you Diamond Dicks do things," averred the captain.

"We were beaten at our own game," muttered Quip Haley.

"I knew it was all up with us the minit I heerd thet Hassayamp had brought word about the Dicks takin' the trail," added Jackson, moodily.

"I'm sorry ter hear Dick stopped thet varmint's knife," commented the Serpent of Siskiyou. "But it ain't a bad cut, ye say, son?"

"No. Diamond Dick will be all right in a few days. How is your leg, captain?"

"The bullet's in there yet, and the wound pains me a good deal, but I'm enough of a surgeon to know that it isn't a bad injury."

"Glad to hear that. But what happened to you fellows? Diamond Dick, when he went back to the gap to reconnoiter, overheard two of the outlaws talking, and from what they said we all got the idea that you two had escaped."

"You see," said Fitzsimmons, "Handsome Harry wouldn't have been in the hands of the outlaws at all if he hadn't jumped out of the buckboard after me."

"I couldn't see ye left alone right among that passel o' coyotes, Fitz," interjected Harry. "The Dicks wouldn't hev gone on themselves, ef they'd knowed what had happened."

"Nevertheless, Harry," resumed the captain, "not every man would have done as you did. I couldn't walk a step, you know, Bertie, and Harry picked me up and carried me into the brush. He did his best to make off with me, but I was too much of a weight, and we finally got run down. We had a brisk fight with the outlaws before we were taken, but numbers told and they got us all right. From that on every thing was pretty tame until we were moved up close to the white rock and Quip Haley and Jackson began

waiting for some one. You can imagine our amazement when we found out who that some one was."

"Imagine ours!" grunted Haley.

"I should say so," mumbled Jackson.

On reaching the trading post Bertie, Harry and the captain were cordially welcomed by Kissane and his daughter and old Diamond Dick.

Bertie was duly congratulated on his success, the prisoners were taken care of, and old Diamond Dick probed for the bullet in Fitzsimmon's leg and succeeded in removing it.

The wound was then dressed, and the captain found that he had been relieved of much of his pain.

When Kissane opened the steel box he found that the annuity money was all intact, and that not a dollar had been lost to the Government.

The cowboys who had left Wolpi on the evening of the snake dance to pursue the Black Dwarf, clung to the trail until they rounded up at the trading post.

They were properly surprised at finding that the Dicks had already effected the capture of the notorious El Muchacho, and, in recounting their experiences, told of finding a man in the trail with a bullet in his heart.

The man looked like a desperado, his clothes were singed and burned, and there was a red scar about his eyes.

Dick and his friends had no difficulty in recognizing in this man no less a person than Bill Sperry, the traitor who had suffered so terribly at the hands of the Dwarf.

But who it was that had fired the bullet which brought Sperry to his end was never known. Diamond Dick, however, supposed that some of Sperry's former comrades had met him and finished the work which El Muchacho had failed to perform.

For two days Dick and his friends remained at the store of the post trader, and when they returned to Wolpi with all their prisoners, except the wounded outlaw, the cowboys accompanied them.

This wounded desperado afterward died, so that only three were left for the Government to deal with.

These three were taken from Wolpi to Winslow, and at the latter place turned over to agents of the Government who had been sent to receive them.

In due course they were tried at the bar of the federal court, and the Black Dwarf and Quip Haley received the extreme penalty of the law and were finally executed.

Jackson, who, fortunately for him, was a follower and not a leader, went to Leavenworth, Kansas, for a term in the military prison.

Bertie had formed quite a friendly attachment for Kissane's daughter, and it was well, perhaps, that the young sport's stay at the post was of only two days' duration.

Otherwise the attachment might have ripened into a stronger regard than that of friendship.

The ride from the trading post to Wolpi and from Wolpi to Winslow, was rather trying to Diamond Dick and Captain Fitzsimmons, on account of their wounds.

Once at Winslow, however, the two friends were able to proceed to their different destinations with tolerable comfort, and in a month both had entirely recovered from their wounds.

The captain, it is safe to say, never forgot his expedition into the Great American Desert with the Diamond Dicks.

Their methods, their daring, everything connected with the capture of El Malo Muchacho, in fact, were in the nature of a revelation to the captain.

And Diamond Dick has a letter from the Government thanking him for his great service in connection with the capture of the Black Dwarf and the recovery of the annuity money.

The old veteran would have been substantially remembered, but he would not have it.

He esteemed it honor enough to be called upon to do a little hot work for Uncle Sam.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 290) will contain a record of Diamond Dick's doings under the caption of "Diamond Dick and the Timber Thieves; or, A Close Call in Custer's Canyon." A thrilling story, boys, full of adventure. Custer's Canyon was a risky place for the Dicks, but they came out safe and sound.



Time's up, boys. The centest has closed with the hot finish we predicted. In three weeks the names of the names of the prize-winners will be announced. The judges have a lot of work before them—piles of letters from all over the continent to read. They will spare no pains to arrive at a fair decision.

In the meantime, boys, we have another big offer to make to you. One of the biggest offers ever made.
LOOK OUT FOR IT IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!

The Murder of Mrs. Wayne.

(By Chas. Lynch, Ill.)

Mrs. Gray, a rich young widow, lived on a farm about one mile north of Hazelton with her son George, a youth fourteen years old.

In the spring of 1898 John and Frank Wayne bought a farm adjoining that of Mrs. Gray.

On the 10th of the next October John Wayne married Mrs. Gray.

One day in the following June Mr. Wayne, upon his return from town, found his wife dead in the woodshed.

The first theory was that she had died of heart disease, but when the coroner's jury came blue marks were appearing on her neck, which soon assumed the shape of a human hand, as if the woman accused her murderer even in death.

The verdict of the jury was death by strangulation.

James Crane, a rival of Mr. Wayne, who, when Mrs. Gray refused him, swore vengeance, was arrested by the police, and upon examination tracks were found leading from the woodshed across a cornfield to the road.

Upon measurement the shoes of Mr. Crane were found to exactly fit these tracks. After the death of Mrs. Wayne, Mr. Wayne was very cruel to George.

Finally the time for Crane's trial came, and on the first and second day the evidence was very strong against him, for, as was afterward found out, several men had been bribed by Mr. Wayne to swear falsely to have seen Mr. Crane enter the house the morning of the murder.

That night Frank came to visit his brother, and George was sent to Hazelton on an errand.

When he returned, as he was passing the room in which the two brothers were he heard them speaking of his mother, and stopping to listen, was astonished to hear Frank telling how he had killed George's mother coming up behind her and strangling her.

"Now, if we were only rid of that kid," said John. "I have a plan which——" But Frank never finished that sentence, for just then George was seized with a fit of sneezing and sneezed very loudly.

Frank and John leaped out into the hall and seeing George running toward the door, Frank drew his revolver and fired. Immediately George was seen to fall.

When they reached him he was found to be wounded in the head and apparently dead.

"Let's throw him in the river," said John, so they took him to the river and tying a rock to his body threw him in. But George had regained consciousness on the way and immediately swam to the other shore and ran as fast as possible to Hazelton, where he told his story to the police.

The police went out and arrested the Waynes, and when confronted by George, Frank broke down and told all. How they had planned to kill Mrs. Wayne and George and get their property.

That night a mob broke into the jail and the next morning two bullet-ridden bodies were found hanging in the woods. Frank, in his confession, implicated those that he had bribed, and six of them were arrested and sent to the penitentiary.

George is now a prominent lawyer in some large city in the East. I think Baltimore is where he is now.

A Party of Brave Men.

(By Jacob Teachner, Oregon.)

On the banks of a beautiful stream in California was encamped a quiet hunting party. The party consisted of a captain, an old judge, a preacher, an old negro cook and several men to look after the mules and other things.

Early one morning the news sped around the camp that a grizzly was near. Then the trouble began. The judge remembered that the grizzly does not like water, so he ran into the stream, but he was so scared that he fell and was carried a long ways in the current. When he landed he was entirely exhausted.

The preacher tried to run up a tree about six feet in diameter, but failing to do so, he fainted.

The captain got a gun and stood his ground for a

short time, but upon hearing a slight noise in the brush he ran away.

Best of all was the old negro. As soon as he heard the news he flung himself on the ground and yelled:

"Le' me alone, Ah ain't done nuffin' yit," and kicking all the time, he finally kicked one of his shoes off, which landed on his head. This he thought was the bear.

At last the supposed grizzly came out of the woods and there stood an old mule, his eyes wide with surprise at the fuss.

Then each one had an excuse. The judge declared he had just taken his morning bath; the preacher said he knew it was a mule at first, but wanted to help the fun along. The old negro said he was just practicing his singing lesson.

A Story of the Far West.

(By Frank Kelcher, Kansas.)

Scene: Depot at train time, in a small town of the far West. A train pulls in. From the coach descends a person who attracts much attention. The man (for we will call him a man) proves to be a modern Cholly boy. He steps from the car and walks gingerly from the station. As he passes a group of boys, who are lounging on a street corner, he slightly turns his head. Now, if anything will make a boy, especially this kind, angry, it is a show of superiority.

The leader of the loungers stares at the stranger and then steps quickly in his path.

The dude seems surprised. He makes a move as if to strike the boy, but after a glance at the latter, changes his mind.

"What is your name?" demanded the boy.

"That is none of your business," curtly returned the stranger.

"Pardon," said the youth; "I am looking for a Chris Johntz. Is that your name?"

"My name is Mister Christopher Johntz, sir."

"And mine is Dan Wheeler."

"Well?"

"I was sent to guide you to my uncle's ranch; if you are ready we'll start now."

"I thought your uncle would send a man to lead me, but I am ready to start."

A surge of blood came into the boy's cheeks. He seemed about to make a retort, but refrained. "We will go immediately," he said. They walked a block down the narrow street and stopped in front of two horses.

"I ride the black generally," said Dan. "He is very mean to strangers, and as that horse is very well trained, you may ride him."

"I'll ride the black," said the city youth, with a sneer. "I attended Professor Gun's training school. I can ride that sleepy horse easy."

A smile overspread the face of Dan. He said nothing, but quietly let the other have his way. The city boy got into the saddle. The horse, which seemed asleep, suddenly awoke. Into the air went the horse. Out of the saddle flew the dude. He returned with a thump.

The horse seemed wild. He snorted, kicked and seemed like a crazy horse. He sprang into the air, backwards, forward and sideways he went. All this time a

very sick dude was given the surprise of his life. He was very sore and gasping for breath. His hat was crushed. His coat and vest were ripped up the back. His large collar was wedged under his jaw. In five minutes he was a total wreck. He was stiff and sore. He knew how to ride, but he had enough for one day.

In the Tunnel Disaster.

(By William Flaherty, N. Y.)

While we were coming through the Grand Central tunnel, nearing the depot, while everything was silent, there came a crash, a bang and the tunnel was all ablaze.

People were screaming and mourning, while I was surprised to find myself sprawling between the tracks ten yards from the wreck, watching the horrible scene of men, women and children, crushed between the cars and trying to fight their way out of the wreck and of the approaching flames.

Then came the noise of the engines, ambulances and patrol wagons. Doctors were examining the people and dressing their wounds and broken bones, while firemen were forcing their ways through the flames trying to rescue the injured people. Patrolmen were keeping the people out of the tunnel, while others went to arrest the engineer of the homebound train.

Then came the newspaper men running like a pack of sheep, some flocking around the dead and wounded, while others were taking a sketch of the remains of the wreck.

While I was trying to pick myself up I heard a childish voice say:

"Mister, would you help me to find my mama."

While we were looking for her mother we passed the body of a woman about twenty-five years of age. The little girl fell on her knees. She sobbed bitterly, saying:

"Mama! mama! wake up, mother, dear."

But her mother never moved. As she was taken away in an ambulance, the little girl went with her. It was the most terrible sight I ever saw in all my life.

The Renegade's Last Massacre.

(By Frank Berta, Ill.)

The sun had just disappeared over the mountains in the distance, as a bright lad of seventeen, dressed in buckskin, slowly rode along the trail.

"They must have gone this way," he muttered, "and I must save them from that treacherous guide."

"We must hurry, Comrade," he said, addressing his horse. "For as I live Broncho Bill is up to some act of treachery. The treacherous cur."

He urged his horse, Comrade, to a faster pace, and was soon on the summit of a small hill, and looked around for signs of a camp.

In the distance he saw the smouldering fires of burned wagons. He urged his horse to a gallop, and was soon among the dead bodies and ruins of the emigrant train.

"Too late! too late!" he cried, as if in mortal grief. "Sioux Sam the renegade leader of the red fiends who

did this hellish deed must be brought to justice. And I'll do it or lose my life in the attempt."

He then dismounted and looked among the dead bodies. But there was one missing.

He expected to find the dead body of Emma Fenton, a beautiful girl of seventeen, the only daughter of brave Colonel Fenton.

She was coming West to make her home with her father.

The colonel had some inkling of the treachery Broncho Bill meant, and sent Jack Raymond, our hero, to warn them of their danger.

But as we have seen he was too late. Miss Fenton was captured by Sioux Sam, who meant to make her his wife, against her will.

Our hero quickly mounted and followed the trail the savages had plainly left. They did not fear pursuit, and therefore did not take the precaution to hide their trail.

Before he had traversed a mile the trail separated.

A small party had turned to the right, while the main body of the Indians kept on straight ahead.

Jack decided to follow the small party that had turned to the right. He was certain that they had taken their fair captive to the mountains.

He followed the trail up the mountains for miles, until it ended at the entrance of a cave with which he was perfectly familiar.

He dismounted and crawled through the entrance.

Ahead of him he saw Sioux Sam cooking a meal, while Miss Fenton was helplessly bound in the rear part of the cave.

Not an Indian was in sight. Jack "covered" the renegade with his rifle.

"Surrender! Sioux Sam, I have you at last!"

The renegade's answer was a shot from his revolver which knocked Jack's hat off.

The next moment our hero sent a bullet crashing through the renegade's brain, killing him instantly.

Jack received the large reward of the Government, which was offered for the capture of Sioux Sam dead or alive.

When he became of age he married Colonel Fenton's pretty daughter and moved to Ohio, where he made his home.

A Tough's First Lesson.

(By C. Hessel Schwerdt, Iowa.)

"Git off der road, an' don't be so slow, will yer, yer old hump-backed whiskers?"

This remark might have been heard by the few people who were crossing Clinton street one morning of a fine day last June. An old man of sixty years, with chin whiskers and a little hump on his back, was crossing the street when a tough on a dray wagon came along and made the remark stated above.

The old man looked up and told the tough to hold in his horse a little, when, with an oath, the tough leaped from his wagon and said:

"I'll show yer, ye durned old humpback. I'll t'row ye clean across ther street."

He was about to touch the old man, when—— Crash!

bang! thud! and our Mr. Tough lay on the road like a log.

"I'll show ye," said the old man. "I used tew fight myself," and he pulled out a plug of tobacco and took a big chew. By this time the tough, who had been stunned, rose to his feet and struck at the old man, but the old man (as he told us after the fight) was a trained fighter in his young days, and as the tough stepped up and struck a blow at the old man he parried it with the greatest ease and then he surprised us all.

He turned out not to be an old man, but a fighting cyclone, for he was a cyclone in human form, for a fact.

He side-stepped, dodged, parried and struck such thundrous blows that he made the tough look like a dime's worth of dog meat. Try his best, he could not as much as touch the old man, for he was here, there and everywhere.

At last the tough saw that he was getting the starch taken out of him, and he made a fearful rush, accompanied with a blow that had it struck the old man it would have killed him in an instant. But our old Uncle Fuller was right there with the goods, and as Mr. Tough rushed, the old man cleverly sidestepped and landed a blow that sounded like an egg when you throw it against the wall.

Crash! was all that we heard, but we saw more, for the moment that the tough had received the blow he went heels over head, and lay there stark and stiff as dead. The old man calmly wiped the sweat from his face and went about his business, while the tough was lifted on his wagon and driven to his employer.

He finally recovered, and then he knew for the first time what happened and that he had learned a good lesson.

How Rob Captured the Burglar.

(By Walter Keefer, Ind.)

Buffalo Bill's Wild West show came to our town last summer, and brother Rob greatly admired the cowboys' skill in handling the lasso. For the next two or three weeks Rob was constantly practicing with a clothes line until he could lasso anything from a chicken up to a cow.

Well, about three weeks ago father received something over three thousand dollars from the sale of a house, and as the bank was closed for the day he had to keep it in the house until next day. As Rob and I came home from school we noticed a very rough-looking man scrutinizing the house, and as we entered the lawn he walked away. We thought nothing of this, thinking him a stranger seeking for somebody.

Father felt no uneasiness about the money, as he said he thought no one knew about the sale of the house. That evening we retired early, sleeping in a room adjoining father's room.

About midnight I was awakened by Rob, tugging at my arm.

"What does that light in father's room mean?" he whispered.

Together we crept to the door, and to our terror observed a man searching father's drawers. Rob looked at me and whispered:

"Wait, I'll fix him."

He tiptoed over to our room, and secured his lasso. He softly took a step forward and whirled the lasso over his head; three, four, five, and the sixth time he cast the noose. Breathlessly I watched the result. If he failed we would be at the robber's mercy, if he succeeded we would have some chance of saving father's money.

The noose fell snugly over the man's shoulders, and together we jerked the rope taut. Our prize was helpless. The rope held his arms tightly against his body and we had him at our mercy. Father did not awaken until we jerked him over to the floor, and his pistol fell from his hand and exploded. Father quickly got out of bed and aided us in binding the struggling man more securely. I then ran to summon the sheriff, and our prize was conducted to the jail. A week after Rob received a \$100 check as a reward for capturing a most notorious robber.

A Never-to-be-Forgotten Experience.

(By Harry Acheson, Washington, D. C.)

I guess most of the boys that read Diamond Dick, Jr., have had adventures more or less, but here is a corker.

One night I was returning from the theatre. As I stepped into my house I heard a noise as of the opening of a drawer. I tiptoed up to the door of the room adjoining the room I was in. The door was open a little and I looked in.

There stood a burglar going through the drawers of the sideboard with an ugly bloodhound sitting on the floor near him. In trying to obtain a better sight into the room I leaned over too far, and losing my balance I fell into the room. As I started to rise something struck me and over I went. As I struck the floor I looked up and the bloodhound was on top of me, gnawing at my left arm. Just then my father came in and the burglar escaped.

I tried to catch the dog, but with a howl he bounded to the window and leaped out. I always remember the experience.

To the Rescue.

(By Ed. Crawford, Fla.)

As the stage rolled heavily over the dusty road a young gentleman was telling the passengers about a hold-up some time before in which he had killed three of the robbers and allowed the stage to pass uninolested.

Just as he had finished his story the stage came to a stop at a cry of "Halt!" and they were surrounded by five masked men, who commanded them to get out one at a time, hold their hands up and get in a line to be searched.

They were all in a row, and the burly rogues were taking up a collection of watches, pocketbooks, etc., when the sound of horses rapidly approaching was heard, and a party of armed men appeared around a sharp turn in the road.

Of course, the robbers took to their heels on the appearance of the approaching force, and were out of sight in a moment. But what of the brave young man?

He had fainted.

DO YOU WANT TO BE AN AUTHOR?

HAVE YOU BEEN reading the thrilling stories that have appeared in the contests going on in the **DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY** recently? You were interested in them; were you not? They were all written by readers of **DIAMOND DICK** such as you are. Do you know any thrilling stories or interesting incidents? If you do you should enter the present

PRIZE CONTEST

you have a good chance of securing a prize. Over one hundred boys have secured prizes in the last two **DIAMOND DICK** Contests. In the present Contest there are

FIFTY PRIZES.

Here Are Full Directions: Take any incident you can think of. It may be a fire, a runaway, an accident, an adventure, or even a murder. It doesn't matter whether you were there or not. Write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. The articles should not be over 500 words in length. The Contest closes **MAY 1**. Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published during the progress of the Contest. *Remember*, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

THE FIVE BOYS who send us the Most Interesting and Best Written "Stories" will each receive ten books, which they will select from the list published in **No. 278**. These books include the finest and most interesting boys' stories ever published.

THE TEN BOYS who send in the next best "Stories" will each receive any four books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

THE FIFTEEN BOYS who send us the next best "Stories" will each receive any three books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

THE NEXT TWENTY BOYS will receive any two books they may select from the list in **No. 278**.

To become a contestant for these prizes cut out the Amateur Journalism Coupon printed herewith; fill it out properly, and send it to **DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your "story." No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest

No. 3.

Date 1902

Name

City or Town

State

Street and No.

Title of Story



OUR TWELFTH HAND.

By GEORGE H. COMMER.

I had entered as a foremast hand on board the ship *Charles Frederick*, lying at New Bedford, and about to sail for Bremen with a cargo of sperm oil. Twelve men had been shipped for the forecabin, and we supposed ourselves all ready for the start, when it was discovered that one of the number was missing; he having made off with his "month's advance, after the manner of that class of vagabond sailors to which, no doubt, he belonged.

Nevertheless, as the *Charles Frederick* was a small ship, she still had a crew sufficient for all ordinary purposes, so that her owners desired Captain Brown, her commander, to make sail at once, without waiting to pick up another hand. This, however, the captain refused to do. He was a thorough seaman, and very methodical in his profession, and he insisted, quite properly, upon having his full complement.

While the matter was under discussion, a stranger in sailor garb was observed coming down the wharf. He stopped for a moment to make some inquiries of a bystander, and we heard the latter say to him:

"Yes; that man with the cap on is Captain Brown; the other two are the owners."

"Captain," said the newcomer, approaching the group and touching his cap, "do you want a man?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I do; you are just in time; I am one man short. You are an able seaman, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; I call myself one."

"Well, go up to the office at the corner yonder, put down your name, and get your advance. One of these gentlemen will go with you. Then tumble your dunnage aboard in a hurry."

The man did as directed, presently appearing with a mattress on his shoulder, together with some other things, to the amount of his fourteen dollars advanced, and without further delay he was ready for duty.

His age was about thirty years, and he seemed like a remarkably strong, active fellow, being mostly bone and sinew, and more than six feet high—a real sea-giant. Yet his face had such a singularly wild expression—his eyes were so glassy and restless—that I felt a secret regret at his having been thrown in our way.

When he came on board, however, he knew exactly

where to take hold, and what to do; and that he was a finished sailor there could be no doubt.

We mastheaded the topsails, loosed the topgallant-sails, braced the head yards sharp, and hauled the jib over to windward, to swing the ship's bow off from the wharf. Yet, busy as we were, I could not help observing something strange in the manner of our twelfth hand. His motions were jerky and nervous; and even when helping us hoist the topsails, he kept glancing quickly from one to the other of us, all the while muttering to himself as if alone.

Most persons have their peculiarities, and his appeared to be the habit of turning his head like a parrot, in order to see on all sides at once.

As our mooring lines were hauled on board, and the sails caught the breeze, the ship moved slowly from the berth, and we passed down the harbor, setting our "light kites" one after another as we went. But whether sheeting home a topgallant-sail or swinging up a royal, whether boarding the main tack or hoisting the flying jib, the new man continued to cast searching looks toward the wharf we had left as long as it was possible to distinguish it.

Soon we were past the harbor beacons, and standing majestically out of Buzzard's Bay, with the mainland upon one side and the Elizabeth Islands upon the other; but even then he would scan the dim shores with that same wild, half frightened glance, as if impatient to see the last of them. In fact, his manner was that of a criminal fleeing from justice.

When the land was wholly out of sight, he appeared to feel more at ease; but still there remained an oddity in his actions, which was very noticeable. On the first night at sea he kept up a constant walking in his watch. The rest of us sat under the weather bulwarks, as sailors are apt to do in their night watches, but this man, Dick, which was the name he went by, walked, and walked, and walked. He had a way, too, of starting suddenly and giving a quick glance aloft, as if expecting something to fall on his head, at the same time muttering rapidly to himself.

So it was on that night, and so it was on succeeding nights, while by day he would, as much as possible, hold himself aloof from us, with the air of one who

anticipates some affront and resents it in advance. There was not the least fault to be found with him as a seaman, yet we all felt that he could never be a welcome addition to a ship's crew, he was so uncommunicative and strange in every way.

How well I remember all the sons of the sea who sailed with me on that voyage. There were Little Jack, Big Jack, Old Jack, and English Jack—four Jacks—Belfast Mike, Kearsage Tom, Boston Bob, Stuttering Bill, Short Ned, and Magellan Joe, besides the stranger, Dick, whose name, by the way, was to receive as striking a prefix as any of the others before we were done with him.

Kearsage Tom was so called because he had been one of the crew of the renowned ship which fought the Alabama; while Magellan Joe received his appellation from having been shipwrecked in that far southern straits which bears the name of the old Portuguese navigator.

But I have not yet mentioned a circumstance in connection with our trip to Europe, which, to me, at least, gave the voyage an additional interest. This was the presence on board the Charles Frederick of the captain's wife and child. Mrs. Brown had taken a fancy to visit Germany, and she was accompanied by her little girl five years of age.

The lady's pleasant face and manner, and the child's innocent sociability and queer little sayings, soon won golden opinions from the grim old Tritons on the main deck, who pronounced the mother a woman that was a woman, and the daughter worth her weight in "plum duff." This last was very high praise.

Even that queer man, Dick, seemed to be moved by the presence of little Clara Brown; but whether favorably or unfavorably, it was hard to say. He would often gaze upon her with such a strange, steadfast look that her mother appeared to feel half alarmed as she observed it. The tall sailor was so gigantic, and his manner so peculiar, that the captain's wife instinctively shrank from him.

The child, too, seemed to share something of her mother's feeling; for while she would talk freely in her pretty way with Old Jack or Magellan Joe, she always showed a timidity in Dick's presence, as if awed by the strange gleam in his large, rolling eyes.

The man's conduct became more and more singular, till the sailors would shake their heads as they spoke of him to each other.

"He has cut up some ugly shline ashore," observed Kearsage Tom, "and that was why he was in such a hurry to get off."

"I don't know about that," replied Big Jack; "it may be so and may be not; but it's my opinion that there's something wrong in his upper works."

"Why, of course there is," said Boston Bob, "and that's what I don't like. There's no trusting a crazy man; he's like a gale of wind that dies away to the south'ard and east'ard, only to come out whistlin' from the nor'ard and west'ard."

"A 'urricane," supplemented English Jack, "you can't tell what's to 'appen ultimately with it."

As I remember, we had been out about six days at this time; and the above remarks were dropped in the evening watch, Dick having done some strange acts on the previous afternoon. There was, indeed, good reasons

for apprehension; for the very next day the catastrophe came. I think it must have been hurried by the peculiar state of the atmosphere. It was a sultry forenoon, a dead calm prevailing, so that the topsails sat lazily against the masts with every roll of the ship.

Presently a line of black clouds shot up in the southern sky, and it looked as if we were to have a heavy squall.

Still not a breath of air reached us over the calm sea.

As soon as possible the light sails were taken in; the topail halyards were let go, the courses got into the buntlines, and the spanker brailed up to the gaff. As the haymaker springs to his work in view of a coming tempest, so did we to ours—running hither and thither in our low-cut duck trousers and sailor caps, while the clouds darkened and the thunder broke in threatening peals.

But even in our hurry we could not help observing the strange actions of Dick. A sort of frenzy appeared to seize him; and, stopping in the midst of his work, he would stare wildly about him, or look up into the sky with a strange, incoherent muttering, while his eyes were as glassy as those of a mad dog.

Notwithstanding the dark portents, there was as yet no wind, and it was possible that we were to have nothing worse than a drenching rain. The captain's wife remained on deck, holding her little girl by the hand, all ready to retreat when the squall should burst upon us.

Suddenly, with a yell that rang through the ship like the cry of a demon, Dick, the gigantic sailor, sprang to the lady's side, and, catching up little Clara, leaped with her into the mizzen rigging. Holding the child under his left arm, he ran aloft with all the nimbleness of a cat.

He made no attempt to climb over the mizzen-top with his burden, but stepping upon the footrope of the mizzen or crossjack yard, out he went to the very end of the yardarm, seating himself astride of it. As it happened to be my "trick" at the wheel, the whole scene was enacted close in front of me, and its picture is still vivid. The crossjack yard was bare, the top-sail having been clewed up from it.

It was the captain's first impulse to spring aloft to the rescue of his child; but a second thought restrained him. The screams of little Clara were heartrending, and those of her agonized mother were no less so. Our whole ship's company stood ready with one accord to follow the giant madman; but would this answer? Captain Brown felt that it would not. A plunge of the crazy sailor into the sea, carrying his victim with him, would, no doubt, be the result of such an attempt; and he would drag her under water sooner than release his hold.

It was a strange and terrible scene. There, on the mizzen yardarm sat the fearful lunatic, hooting and grimacing; his head bare, and his hair seeming to stand on end; while the little girl, held fast in his frenzied clutch, stretched her small arms imploringly toward her parents, calling upon them to save her.

Clustered upon the deck beneath were all the stout tars, gazing up at the spectacle, and waiting but permission to act. A space of only thirty or forty feet separated the little one from the group below; but still there must be no rashness.

By this time the intensely black clouds had made the day almost like night. Vivid lightning flashed on every side, shooting down to the ocean in zigzag lines; and the thunder seemed to break scarcely higher than the ship's masts. Oh, how distinctly were the forms of the maniac and the little girl outlined against the inky sky and its sharp, fierce lightning.

Still, by a wonderful good fortune, it did not blow hard. A breeze reached the vessel just sufficient to steady her, and that was all. It would prove a rain squall rather than a wind squall. And at last, sure enough, the rain came down. It was a flood such as almost took away one's breath. The maniac screamed and gesticulated, apparently in delight, while little Clara lay motionless in his brawny arms. Poor little girl! she was past struggling for the moment.

"Lower away the yawl," said Captain Brown, who preserved a remarkable coolness. "Five of you get into her and keep her close under the ship's counter."

The command was instantly obeyed, and the yawl was manned by five men—Little Jack, Big Jack, Old Jack, Magellan Joe, and Kearsage Tom.

"Now, lay the mizzen yard square," was the next order.

This was for the purpose of getting the yardarm and its occupants as far out over the ship's quarter as possible.

"Softly, softly," he added, as the men laid hold of the brace—"so; belay all. Now I am going aloft," he said. "Two of you come with me; the rest stand by for whatever may happen."

He stepped into the mizzen shrouds, followed by English Jack and Boston Bob. It rained so that I could hardly see them through the pouring water sheet as I stood at the wheel. The captain carried an iron belaying pin to be used in case of extremity.

As the maniac saw the three men approach, one after another along the footrope of the yard, he yelled a furious defiance, and instead of leaping overboard, he showed a frightful eagerness to close with them as he sat balancing himself on the yard, with the look of a wild beast at bay. Still clutching the child, he threw himself fiercely forward in a desperate effort to grasp the captain's throat.

Down came the iron pin, and the strong arm was disabled. Instinctively the madman released little Clara, and her father, standing in the footrope, snatched her in time to prevent her falling. But once more Dick secured the child, and in the struggle that ensued all three plunged headlong from the yard.

Neither English Jack nor Boston Bob, who had followed the captain out on the footrope, had been able to render any assistance, and they had now only to hurry down to the deck.

Captain Brown, little Clara and the furious maniac all struck the water together, disappearing beneath it; but in a few moments the captain shot strongly to the surface holding his child's head higher than his own. They were not fifty feet from the boat.

"There they are!" cried Magellan Joe; "pull, chaps!"

The yawl shot swiftly ahead, and father and child, grasped by the tarry hands of her crew, were at once drawn on board of her.

Crazy Dick came up a few feet from them; but instead

of attempting to reach either boat or ship, he struck wildly out from both, as if fancying his shipmates to be demons.

When Clara and her father had been transferred to the vessel's deck, the yawl went in chase of the poor lunatic, as the captain would have been glad to save him; but on her approach he plunged under a big wave, and we saw him no more. Indeed, the pouring rain and blinding lightning had made it difficult to keep sight of him, even while he was above water.

Little Clara Brown was dreadfully exhausted, but she soon recovered; and the next day her pretty feet went pattering as usual all about the ship, while Old Jack and the others had a thousand things to say to her.

It was a remarkable piece of good fortune that with all the thunder, lightning, and rain in that memorable ocean scene, there should have been scarcely any wind. But such a state of things will now and then occur both on sea and shore. A fierce squall, such as we expected at the moment, would have sealed little Clara's fate.

Upon our arrival at Bremen, we read in an American newspaper, brought out by a steamer, a paragraph relating to an escaped lunatic, whose description exactly corresponded with that of Crazy Dick. The man's name, it said, was Richard Hardy, and he was a sailor who had just landed from a vessel which had brought him home in irons. He had eluded those who had him in charge, and had been traced to New Bedford, where it was found that he had just sailed in the ship Charles Frederic for Bremen.

We all felt what a dreadful sequel could now be added to that brief item of the press.

Playing Tag with a Maniac.

(By Charles W. Gorham, Washington.)

One day my friend, George, and I were passing the asylum at Stielacoom.

Seeing some of the quieter patients playing in the yard, we stopped to watch them. Suddenly, with a wild yell, one of them dashed toward us and cleared the fence with a bound.

We both took to our heels, George going one way and I, pursued by the lunatic, going another. I ran as never before, but he gained rapidly, and before we reached the outskirts of the town he was nearly upon me.

Feeling his hot breath upon my cheek, I turned sharply to one side and entered a small strip of woods. Dodging among the trees, growing more desperate every moment, and, feeling that I must fight and overcome him to escape, I seized a short, heavy stick. Gathering all my strength, I raised it high above my head, but before I could strike he had torn the club from my grasp and thrown it away. Then, with a smile, he touched me gently on the shoulder and said, "Tag, you're it!"



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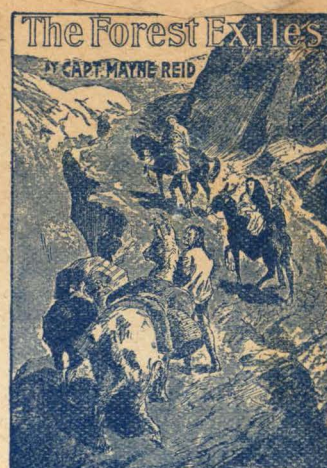
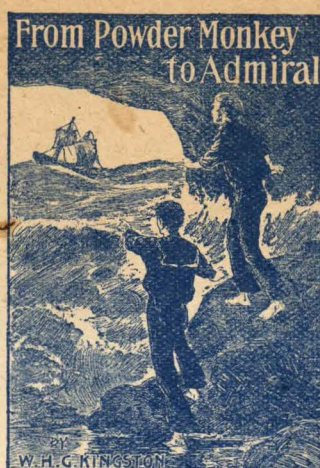
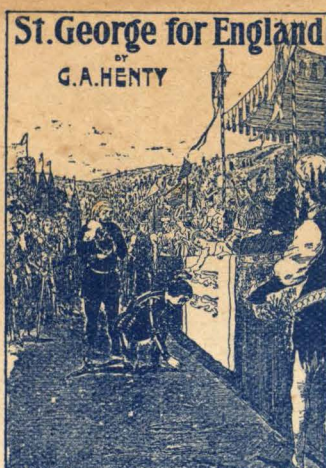
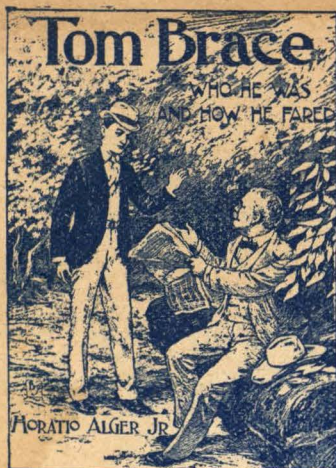
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